

French
Artists of
Our Day



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GUSTAVE COURBET

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**FRENCH ARTISTS OF
OUR DAY: GUSTAVE
COURBET**

FRENCH ARTISTS OF OUR DAY

COURBET. By Léonce Bénédict, Curator of the Luxembourg, Professor at the Ecole du Louvre.


MANET. By Louis Hourticq, Deputy Inspector of Fine Arts of the Town of Paris.

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES. By André Michel, Curator of the National Museums, Professor at the Ecole du Louvre.

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I. COURBET AU CHIEN NOIR. (Courbet with a Black Dog.)

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GUSTAVE COURBET

With a Biographical and Critical Study
by LEONCE BENEDITE
Curator of the Luxembourg
Gallery, Professor at the
Ecole du Louvre, & Notes
by J. LARAN and
PH. GASTON-
DREYFUS, with
Forty-eight
Plates

PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
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GUSTAVE COURBET

(1819-1877)

IN the world of art there has never been a personality so clamorously imposed upon the minds of its contemporaries as that of Courbet. He was anathema to his generation and he forced himself upon its judgment with all the weight of his loud voice, self-importance and his intolerable and overweening vanity. If we are to understand his career we must find an explanation for this feeling and some excuse for it. He exasperated the public and exhausted the patience of his best friends. So much did he irritate public and critics that in the unhappy closing years of his life he paid dearly for the misunderstanding that lay between them. He was a harmless braggart but he was in the end regarded as a dangerous man. He was taken at his word, and after 1870, when, in the midst of harassing political events, he threw in his lot with the revolutionaries and shouted and roared louder than any of them, he was so compromised that he could find none to defend him save a few of his more enlightened colleagues who had understood him, and had a great admiration for him as a painter. He was cruelly treated and the end of his life was sad and embittered. But, severe though his judges were, there is some excuse for them, such a strain had he placed on their patience.

He had an enormous and rather gross appetite for fame, a Pantagruellesque thirst for glory. At all costs he must have people talking about him; he was perpetually outdoing himself in his efforts to astonish, always on the look out for a fresh opportunity of shocking the public into attention, when, weary and exhausted, it turned its eyes away

from him. He was the hub of the universe; he said so and did genuinely believe it, so completely was he intoxicated by his own boasting. The biographies are full of fantastic and perfectly authentic stories of his childish and colossal vanity. The portrait which Théophile Silvestre drew of him, with, indeed, a great deal of kindness, gives us many such typical anecdotes. Certainly not even Napoleon was more concerned with history. There was not a single action in his life that was not a sort of demonstration designed to stir the world. On the day when he decided to refuse the cross of the Legion of Honour, and, as he came out of a café with Fantin and some other friends, dropped into the post his famous letter to the Ministry, he turned to his companions and bade them mark well what he was doing since it would make the day memorable in the history of the world.

But his letters are above all things the least capable of deception. To gain any idea of the tastelessness, the utter folly of his monstrous boasts, it is necessary to turn to the copious and solid monument that Georges Riat has raised to his memory and to read the correspondence of this terrible, spoiled, chattering, bragging "mufle" (if the slang may be permitted) child. He wrote, for example, to Bruyas, his faithful financial "backer" when he built his wooden shed by the Alma bridge: "I have built a cathedral. . . . The whole world stands amazed. My triumph is not only over the moderns but over the ancients as well. It is a very Louvre. There is no Champs-Élysées, no more Luxembourg, no more Champ de Mars. . . . I have staggered and dismayed the whole art world. . . ."

With his companions he is even more childishly swaggering. He tots up the list of noble persons flocking round

him. "The Count Choiseul and his sister, the Marquise de Montalembert, have just left my house. . . . Father Hyacinthe mentioned my name in his lecture at Notre-Dame . . . My success in Paris just at present is incredible. I shall soon be the only artist left."

Courbet was really much better than the absurd attitude he adopted. Later generations which do not have to suffer from it can laugh at his buffoonery and forget the man in his work, as it is in duty bound to do, for his work is as admirable as the man was odious and tiresome. It is, however, useless to dissociate them, it is essential not to forget the man if his work is to be rightly understood.

Indeed the native qualities of his wholeheartedly and fundamentally naïve character are not hidden by his acquired attributes, for all his overweening vanity and his gross Franche-Comté peasant cunning; his character was not blunted by culture and the whole man is in his work, with all his excesses, his vagaries, his violence, his lack of taste, his hunger for publicity, and also with all his physical beauty, his abounding health, his mountainy vigour, and sometimes a certain strange natural grace and charm. Perhaps even it may be said that some of his most detestable failings, which often proved stronger than his inspiration, reveal to us the secret of his most magnificent audacities, and his most admirably successful daring experiments.

As is well known, Courbet was in the habit of giving his own definition of his art, and did so notably in his preface to the catalogue of his exhibition in the Avenue Montaigne in 1855. He was a "realist." More than that! He was "Realism," the proud title which he gave to his exhibition.

He explains the nature of his realism in the manifesto, drawn up perhaps by the cunning pen of one of his accredited censor-bearers, Champfleury, for instance, which is so amazing in its calm deduction and its style which has so little in common with his usual florid eloquence.

"I have studied, with a complete disregard for any system, the art of the ancients and the art of the moderns. I have neither tried to imitate the first nor to copy the latter; nor have I come to the blind alley of 'Art for Art's Sake.'

No! I have tried only in a full knowledge of tradition to discover a reasoned and independent consciousness of my own individuality. My only aim has been to find power in knowledge. It has been my aim to transcribe the manners, ideas, aspect of my own generation, as fully and as closely as I can, to be not only a painter but also a man, in a word, my aim is to create a living art." Not even Thoré could have done better than that.

Was this programme, as a programme, so very original? It had all been said over and over again long before Courbet. We have only to turn to the preface to the Salon of 1833, written by Laviron, in the very heat of the most triumphant period of romanticism, to find that these ideas were in the air and in the minds of those who fought the deficiencies and failings of romanticism, just as they fought those of classicism.

"Actuality and the social tendency of art," wrote Laviron, "are our chief concern; next come truth in representation and the greater or less skill in material execution. We demand actuality before all else because we desire the reaction of art upon society and its impulse towards progress. We ask truth of art because, to be understood, it must be alive."

These two apostles of modernity who came within twenty years of each other are only distinguished by their labels. Laviron baptized the new craftsmen of his work of reaction and progress "naturalists." Courbet called himself a realist but the word is no more particular to himself than his programme.

Before his time many many men had unconsciously or deliberately attempted the work that he was destined to accomplish. Between 1830 and 1840 there were countless attempts to break free from the literary or historical influences of romanticism and the academic tyranny of the classics, made by men who also were trying to transcribe the contemporary life of men and so to follow in the path of the valiant landscape painters who were marching from conquest to conquest. This desire to restore art to its true path and to make it express the aspirations and the forms of contemporary life had sprung into being at the very beginning of the century. Without going back so far as Delacroix, Géricault, Gros or David, it is very certain that, with and following Decamps, there was a whole host of artists who were profoundly stirred by the fermentation of ideas of the time, a movement which was to end in the great democratic outbreak of 1848. To mention only two of the most significant of these men, though one of them is only just beginning to find his proper level and the other is still left in unjust oblivion, was there not the brave Cals, who, in 1835 and after, set himself to transcribe with a certain emotional tenderness till then unknown, intimate scenes in the life of the people? Was there not Jeanron, the sturdy, proud Jeanron, whom Thoré dubbed, "a plebeian painter, even in his interpretation of landscape?"¹

Where then lies Courbet's originality in the current of art which his work was so powerfully to direct in the latter half of the nineteenth century?

His originality lies in this, that in his handling of these ideas and in his observation of familiar realities he was instinctively, spontaneously, without study or effort, the man for his work. In others these tendencies were up to a certain point preconceived, deliberate, premeditated, except perhaps in the case of Cals, the workman's son, who never rose above his class, and modestly painted the life about him without ever seeing anything else. But his shy, tender, veiled art could not win converts. As for Jeanron, he was a man of intelligence, a distinguished man, though he ended miserably, and for a short time, with an authority that was never properly recognized, he filled the office of Director of the National Museums and prepared the way for the reorganization of the Louvre. In his scenes of contemporary life and provincial and country life, Courbet was wholly true to himself. This too was what created the exceptional power of expression of his great though more religious and mystical follower, Millet. Millet was a peasant, the son of a peasant, who, until he was twenty-one, lived and worked with his brothers of the soil. Courbet, the son of a vine-grower, a Franche-Comté hillman, always remained the son of his village, the little narrow world over which he could hold undisputed sway by his great prestige and fame. As Th. Silvestre makes him say in the pretentious philosophic German jargon then the mode in all the taverns, Courbet united the "subjective" and the "objective." That may be taken to mean that he saw with admirable clarity everything that touched him nearly;

he saw such things with feeling, with that sort of emotion which, with the sensibility peculiar to him, he cast about his very real and strong attachment to the things appertaining to his family, his home, his native country. His "great love" springs naturally in his breast, and is the favourite subject of his pictures. Tenderly he caresses its image as a "fine Chaldean shepherd." And he painted many a masterpiece through his simple, candid adoration.

Courbet's strength lies in the fact that the effusiveness of his temperament protected him from the errors of realism. His swaggering, bragging character, his sacrifice of everything to his own personality, were translated in his interpretation of Nature into a sort of heightening, enlarging exaggeration which gave him a feeling for style. This saved him from literal imitation, exact copying, reporting. He saw everything largely, broadly, in great masses and strong contrasts. What might easily have been vulgarity in another man became powerful triviality in him; everything personal and particular, in spite of himself, took on a general character. Although he painted his sisters, his father, his neighbour, Josette, the peasants of Flagey, old Gagey, the stone-breaker, the familiar names of people and places are lost sight of, and all these figures become, willy-nilly, representative types.

Further, the craftsman is so incomparable that we now forget all the folly of his social, moral, æsthetic, positivist and mathematical philosophy and see only the brilliance, the power and the splendour of his pictures, absurd though they be both in subject and composition. And Delacroix himself when he came to the huge paradoxical and incoherent picture called "L'Atelier" anticipated

the judgment of our time and declared that he had "discovered a masterpiece" and could not "tear himself away from it."

Again "*L'Enterrement à Ornans*" is, when analysed, a really extraordinary picture. Courbet tried to mystify his Parisian public by serving up to its gaze the faces of all the chief characters of Ornans, from the solemn pretentious mayor down to the ruddy-cheeked choristers and old Cassard, the ditcher. But, with that power of concrete and almost sculptural realization which is only to be found in a Velasquez or a Jordaens, he created a composition which is quite admirable in its unity and harmony, its powerful accord, rich and expressive between the blacks and whites and reds of the costumes, the cast-off clothes of the society which he so cleverly brought out into the open air. There is a great deal more of the poet in this tremendous fellow than he thought, and there is a great capacity for emotion. If we take out of the picture—as has been done for the purposes of this book—the group of women, the really unpremeditated pathos of the faces of these women, young and old, is simply astonishing. There is in them all the emotional grandeur of the most religious pictures of the Middle Ages. Taken by itself this fragment is, in its really expressive character, quite beautiful.

Let us call Courbet a realist, since he wishes it; he is a realist in his subjects, which are evidently taken from the everyday realities of his surroundings. But he is, above all, a "realizer." If he was lacking in taste in his choice of subject, if he had no sense of the ridiculous, and was thereby tripped up in more than one of his pictures, which would otherwise have been absolute masterpieces,

he had as a painter a full and healthy power of beauty, often an innate distinction, an ease, a spontaneity which created a profound impression on the most enlightened of his contemporaries and made his influence upon most of the great schools inevitable. Many Belgian and German masters owe much of their work to him, and in France his virile, frank craftsmanship produced a reaction against the equivocal practices of academic painters or the degenerate romantics and gave birth to a whole group of men whose work is of vital importance in our history. Even his unpopularity aided his cause. It was so unanimous and so persistently engineered that none of his pictures passed unnoticed for a period of thirty years, his reputation gained ground through his notoriety and every proscription of his work brought him new friends and disciples. He was in Paris the "painter" par excellence, and the finest painters of our time have derived their finest inspiration from him or have turned to him for it. Men like Manet, Fantin, Legros, Whistler, Monet, Renoir, Carolus-Duran, Ribot, Stevens and many others. With Corot and Millet, Courbet is incontestably one of the three great artistic leaders of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

LEONCE BENEDITE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IT would be difficult to find a writer on modern art who had not devoted a certain number of pages to Courbet. None of the pictures he exhibited passed unnoticed. It is therefore quite impossible to mention all the articles in which the artist is mentioned. However students can easily find them in the bibliography of Salon criticisms and in the recently published lists of contents of the leading art reviews. We shall only here mention, in chronological order, a few of the larger works.

Théophile Silvestre, "*Histoire des Artistes Vivants, études d'après nature*" (1856); M. Guichard, "*Les Doctrines de M. Courbet, maître peintre*" (1862); E. Chesneau, "*L'Art et les Artistes Modernes*" (1864); P. J. Proudhon, "*Du Principe de l'Art et de sa Destination Sociale*" (1865); Emile Zola, "*Mes Haines . . .*" (1866); Théodore Duret, "*Les Peintres Français en 1867*" (1867); Camille Lemonnier, "*G. Courbet et son Oeuvre*" (1868); "*Lettres de G. Courbet à l'Armée Allemande*" (Oct. 1870); Max Sulzberger, "*Le Réalisme en France et en Belgique . . .*" (1874); Max Claudet, "*G. Courbet, Souvenirs*" (1878); Comte H. d'Ideville, "*G. Courbet, Notes et Documents . . .*" (1878); Gros-Rost, "*Courbet, Souvenirs Fortunes*" (1880); Castagnary, "*Gustave Courbet et la Colonne Vendôme, Plaidoyer pour un Ami Mort*" (1883); Victor Fournel, "*Les Artistes Français Contemporains . . .*" (1884); Paul Salvisberg, "*Kunsthistorische Studien*" (1884-87); Al. Estignard, "*Portraits Francs-Courtois*" (1885); Jean Gigoux, "*Causeries sur les Artistes de mon Temps*" (1885); J. Barbey d'Aurévilly, "*Les Oeuvres et les Hommes . . .*" (1887); Camille Lemonnier, "*Les*

Peintres de la Vie " (1888); A. Estignard, "G. Courbet, sa Vie et ses Oeuvres " (1897); J. Breton, "La Peinture " (1904); Julius Meier-Graefe, "Corot et Courbet " (1905); Georges Gazier, "G. Courbet" (1906); M. Robin, "G. Courbet " (1909).

Special mention must be made of the conscientious monograph, with its numerous documents, by G. Riat, published by Floury in 1906. If the premature death of the author had not unfortunately prevented his completing his study with his promised catalogue and bibliography, it might be said that historians would have small opportunity of discovering any really useful information about Courbet's life and work.

PLATE I. COURBET AU CHIEN NOIR (COURBET
AND A BLACK DOG)

COURBET was one of Courbet's favourite subjects. It has often been thrown up against him by men who forget that an artist has great difficulty in finding a model as convenient or as well-studied as himself.

But, it was said, the painter who delighted in making so many of his contemporaries look uglier than they were was "much nicer and more generous when it came to his own face." (Edmond About, 1857.) The artist has no excuse save the masterpieces that his rather exclusive indulgence has given us. Everybody who knew him as a young man is agreed in saying that he was very beautiful.

"He was very tall and broad, he had a firm face with regular features, lightly tanned, and lit up by a pair of magnificent ox-eyes. His hair was thick and long, and his curly beard left uncovered a charming, sensitive mouth, always ready to curl up its ironical, deep corners . . . and he had a rustic appearance withal that made him look like a Chaldean shepherd. Such was Courbet. His walk had the sturdy balance of the countryman, his head always bending down towards the earth as though he were following some scent, for he had more temperament than intelligence, and more sensuality than poetic feeling." (Jules Breton, "La Peinture," p. 181.)

"Courbet au Chien Noir" is a self portrait painted in 1842, and it procured him his first official recognition. Courbet, then a young man of twenty-three, painted himself against a landscape in his native province, near the grotto of Plaisir-Fontaine, sitting with a beautiful

spaniel, a present from one of his friends, which, as he says in one of his letters, was admired by every one.

The portrait was admitted by the jury of the Salon of 1844, and, in spite of the refusal of another picture, it was a source of great joy to the artist, who had been working in Paris for four years, without a master, going his own way, to the great distress of his family. "I have been admitted to the Exhibition," he wrote to them "and am highly delighted. It is not the picture I should have preferred them to take but it makes no matter. It is all I ask, for the picture they rejected was not finished. They did me the honour of hanging me well in the Exhibition and that is some compensation." And he goes on to explain that if his picture had been larger it would certainly have been awarded a medal, "which would have been a magnificent beginning."

The "Courbet au Chien Noir," which figured in the 1900 Exhibition, has recently been returned to the "Petit Palais" as a gift from Mlle Juliette Courbet.

PLATE II. LE GUITARRERO (THE GUITAR-PLAYER)

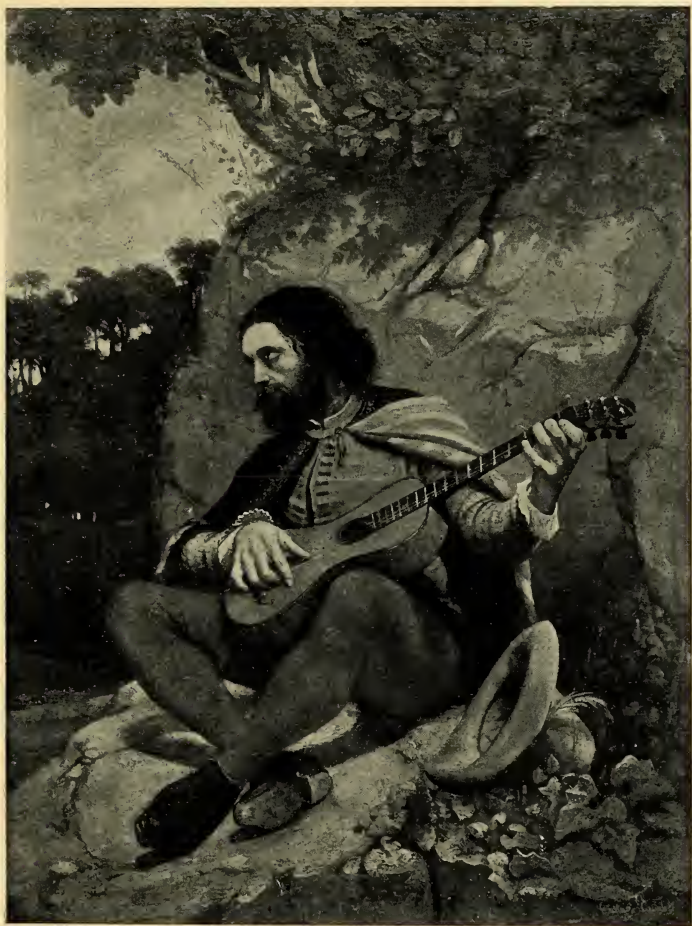
THE following year, 1845, Courbet, who already had a great capacity for work and a remarkable facility, sent five pictures to the Salon. The jury only accepted one little picture called "Le Guitarrero," which had been painted in a fortnight. It was formerly in the Faure collection, but passed to the Bernheim gallery, where it has recently been sold. With his usual optimism the artist soon consoled himself for his setback; and hastened to inform his family that a banker and a merchant were making offers for the "Guitarrero." But while he was hesitating whether to ask five hundred francs or less, the purchasers had disappeared.

It is easy to recognize Courbet's features beneath the romantic accoutrement of his subject. The picture is very typical of the artist's early hesitations.

Only one thing was certain for him at that time, the imperative need of keeping away from the school of the official painters. He had nothing to learn of them after a few sittings of the model in the studio of Baron Steuben and a few conversations with Auguste Hesse. He found it more profitable to copy the old masters like Rembrandt, Franz Hals, Van Dyck, Velasquez, or the more or less courageous moderns like Géricault, Delacroix, and even Schnetz or Robert Fleury, who were his guides before he had found his own way.

The rather shoddy romanticism of this picture was reproduced in much of the painter's work during this first period. Together with a portrait of his sister, Juliette, jokingly called "La Baronne de M . . ." he sent in a

"Rêve de Jeune Fille," the hackneyed sentimentality of which it is easy to imagine. A short time before, in 1841, he had painted himself with his head in his hands and called the picture "Despair." Among his early romantic titles are "Ruins by a lake " (1839); a "Monk in a Cloister " (1840), "Man delivered from Love by Death," an "Odalisque," inspired by Victor Hugo, a "Lelia " borrowed from George Sand, and a "Walpurgis Night" taken from Goethe's "Faust." Better known are the "Amants dans la Campagne" (Lovers in the Country), and "Sentiments du Jeune Age " (Feelings of Youth), two copies of which are in public collections in France; one in the Lyons museum, and the other in the Petit Palais in Paris, the gift of Mlle Juliette Courbet.



II. LE GUITARRERO. (The Guitar-Player).

PLATE III. LE HAMAC (THE HAMMOCK)

MUCH more personal is the picture called "Le Hamac," here reproduced.

It bears the date 1844 and is now in the collection of Prince de Wagram. As it never appeared, so far as is known, in any important exhibition we cannot set it side by side with contemporary impressions as we shall do in the case of the subsequent pictures.

It would have been interesting to know what sort of reception was given to the unconventional figure, rather vulgar in its charm, though drawn in a naturalistic style, that must have seemed very audacious at the time, and set in one of those bold landscapes that were quite enough to win recognition for Courbet.

To gain any idea of the ardour with which the painter was trying to find himself at this time or of the tremendous ambition and energy with which he was working we have only to turn to the letter he wrote to his family in March, 1845: "Next year," he says, "I must paint a great picture which will make me known beyond all doubt, for I must have all or nothing, I can do more than such little pictures as I have been doing. . . . I want to do great painting. That is not presumption on my part, for everybody who knows anything about art and has any acquaintance with me predicts it for me. The other day I did a study of a head and when I showed it to M. Hesse he told me in front of the whole class that there were very few masters in Paris capable of doing anything like it. . . . I admit that there was some exaggeration in what he said. But what is very certain is that I am bound to have a name in Paris before five years are out."

By way of forcing attention to himself, for its tardiness

in coming was a sore trial to his patience, Courbet sent eight pictures to the Salon of 1846, and, alas, seven of them were refused. The eighth (probably his own portrait now in the museum at Besançon) was very badly hung: "they have stuck it on the ceiling so that it is impossible to see it."

In face of this setback Courbet for a moment lost his philosophy, if not his confidence. He was now in the ranks of those who—often quite justly—cry out against the severity of the jury. "Every one is complaining," he said. "It is just a lottery." There was a "grudge" against him, and the judges were "a pack of old imbeciles" entirely preoccupied with the idea of "muzzling young men who might trample them in the dust."



III. LE HAMAC. (The Hammock.)



PLATE IV. L'HOMME A LA PIPE (THE MAN
WITH A PIPE)

THE following year, 1847, brought a fresh disaster. Three pictures were sent to the Salon and rejected.

The artist was dumbfounded. It was no good despising the judges, for their decision was big with consequences, "I must exhibit to make myself known and unfortunately that is the only exhibition. In past years when I had not thoroughly mastered my own style and was still painting to a certain extent in theirs they accepted my work; but now that I am myself there is no hope for me."

Courbet was not alone in such protestation. It was after the Salon that Delacroix, Decamps, Dupré, Rousseau, Daumier, etc., met at Barye's house and tried to found an independent Salon.

But the revolution of 1848 led to a reconstitution of the jury on a new basis and the three pictures of Courbet's that had been refused were allowed to appear in subsequent exhibitions. The painter's reputation did not suffer by this long term of probation. Even in 1848 he had attracted the notice of Champfleury and Prosper Haussard and from that time on he was encouraged by a little group of admirers who regarded him as a "great painter."

Among the rejected pictures of 1847 was a little masterpiece called "L'Homme à la Pipe," which was shown in the Salon of 1850-51. But in that exhibition Courbet had other pictures of a much greater importance. Criticism was far too busy with "L'Enterrement" to pay much attention to "L'Homme à la Pipe." However it served the judges who set out to combat Courbet's taste and

theories as an opportunity for doing justice to his "masterly technique."

"The portrait," said Louis Peisse, "is a masterly piece of painting." "It is handled," added Delécluze, "with rare talent and a remarkable suavity and breadth of brushwork." And Vignon said: "It is a very jewel of drawing, subtlety and technique. . . ."

"L'Homme à la Pipe," it appears, was almost bought from the exhibition by the Prince President. But the negotiations fell through. Courbet wrote to Bruyas, who bought the picture in May, 1854: "I am delighted that you should have my portrait. It has escaped the barbarians. It is a miracle, for, at a very difficult time, I was bold enough to refuse to sell it to Napoleon for two thousand francs, and later to the Russian general, Gortschakoff. . . ."

Bruyas, of whom we shall have frequent occasion to speak, lent "L'Homme à la Pipe" to several private exhibitions of Courbet's work, and he left it with his collection to the Montpellier Museum.



IV. L'HOMME A LA PIPE. (The Man with the Pipe).

PLATE V. L'HOMME A LA CEINTURE DE CUIR
(THE MAN WITH THE LEATHER GIRDLE)

AT the Salon of 1849, through a happy inspiration of Charles Blanc, then Director of Fine Arts, the Institut gave way to a jury elected by the exhibitors. This gave their revenge to the independent artists, notably to Courbet, who had seven pictures accepted out of the seven sent in.

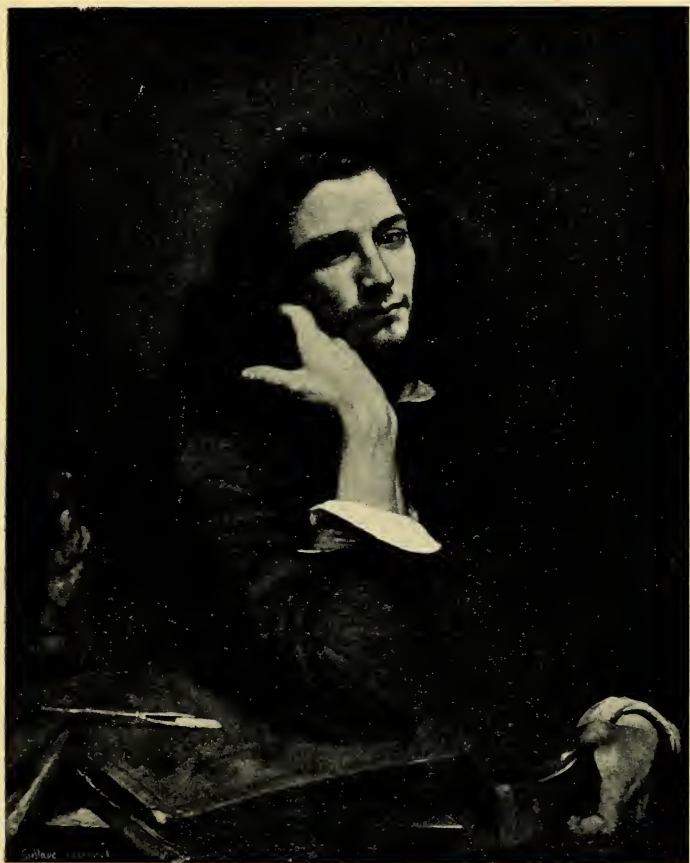
These included several landscapes, the curious portrait of the "philosopher" Trapadoux, one of the prototypes of the "Hill" of Mürger (now in the H. Rouart collection), "L'Après-Dîner à Ornans," which we shall consider separately, and the admirable portrait of Courbet himself, known as "L'Homme à la Ceinture de Cuir," which was at first exhibited under the bizarre title: "Portrait de l'Auteur. Etude des Vénitiens."

In this picture, dated 1844 (?), he has not depicted himself as he usually did with his genial, careless air, and his jovial, full-blooded vanity. We are here shown an elegant, distinguished Courbet, calm and authoritative, noble and grave as a Christ of Ribéra. But it is an authentic aspect of Courbet, to be found also in the written descriptions of his contemporaries.

"He was thin, tall, supple," wrote Burty, "and he had long black hair and a black silky beard. He was never seen without a little band of friends, as we are told the Italian masters used to leave their studios. His long, languishing eyes, his straight nose, his low, superbly modelled brow, his full lips with their mocking corners corresponding with the mocking light in his eyes, his smooth, rounded cheeks, made him look exactly like one of those profile portraits of the Assyrian kings set on

the bodies of bulls. His drawling, melodious voice . . . gave a pleasant charm to his sweet caressing speech."

It was not until 1881, a few years after the artist's death, that the State bought this splendid picture—for 29,000 francs. It passed through the Luxembourg on its way to its final resting place in the Louvre. Although it is considerably blackened, yet it ranks as one of the finest self-portraits of artists in the Denon Gallery.



V. L'HOMME A LA CEINTURE DE CUIR.
(The Man with the Leather Girdle.)

PLATE VI. L'APRES-DINER A ORNANS (AFTER
DINNER AT ORNANS)

THIS picture was exhibited in the Salon of 1849, and is the first in point of time of the great works of Courbet. It was also the first really to attract the attention of the public.

"Yesterday," wrote Champfleury, "nobody knew his name. To-day it is in every mouth. It is long since there has been such an immediate success. Last year I was the only man to mention his name and his quality. . .

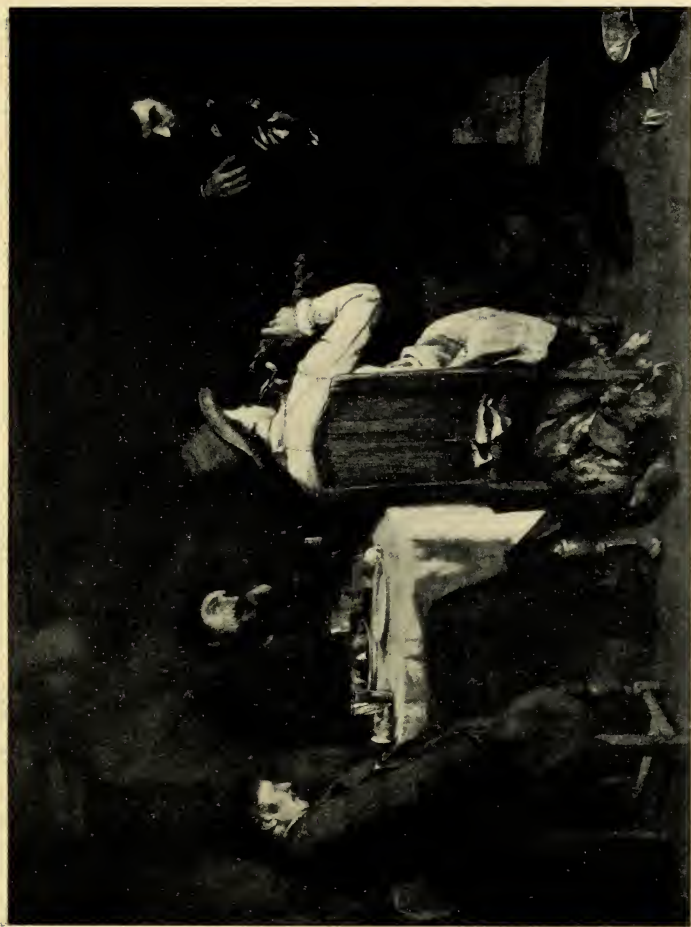
Therefore I may be permitted to scourge the indolence of those critics who only concern themselves with men of established reputations, and neglect the young men of strength and courage who are destined to take their places, and perhaps to make better use of them. . . ."

There were still very many of the critics who did not share Champfleury's enthusiasm. Among other serious defects in the eyes of its contemporaries, the picture was found lacking in subject, as the word was at that time interpreted. "It is a five-foot canvas representing a genre scene," said F. de Lagenevais in the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*." M. Ingres regretted that he could discover neither drawing nor composition in a picture of such rare talent. Delacroix was hardly less reserved in his admiration. Gautier, who was usually so indulgent towards anything that showed a new spirit, did his utmost to praise Courbet, but he did not understand poetry except it were set in noble form and rare colour.

Courbet's programme was a very different matter. Round the table at Ornans he grouped certain of his intimates. His father is sitting sleeping; Adolphe Marlet is lighting his pipe with a glowing coal; the bulldog is

sleeping under his chair, and the artist himself is listening dreamily to Promayet, the musician, playing his violin in the semi-darkness.

In their inability to feel that everyday life contains mightier and saner poetry than fabulous and historical scenes, Courbet's contemporaries no doubt drove him to emphasize his note in order to gain a better understanding. They are partly responsible for the deliberate triviality which he at times was apt to blazon forth in his effort to rejuvenate art, and give it, as Z. Astruc said, a natural and sweet simplicity. Courbet was given a second-class medal for "L'Après-Dîner." It was bought for 1,500 francs by the State and sent to the Lille Museum. The dark backgrounds, so much affected by Courbet at his time, have been blackened by time.



VI. L'APRES-DINER A ORNANS. (After Dinner at Ornans.)

PLATE VII. LES PAYSANS DE FLAGEY (THE
PEASANTS OF FLAGEY)

THE Salon of 1850-51 was one of the most important in the artist's career. The jury, elected by the artists, accepted the eight pictures he had sent in, and among them were "L'Homme à la Pipe," the portraits of "Berlioz" and the apostle "Jean Journet," "Les Paysans de Flagey, revenant de la Foire," "Les Casseurs de Pierres" and "L'Enterrement." Such a collection of pictures could not be passed over. From a little group of waverers Courbet's friends and adversaries took up their stand.

In his native country, whither he returned on long visits, Courbet lingered over the familiar scenes and people. Among the peasants whom he painted on their way home to Flagey from the market at Salins, we can recognize his father on horseback. The young woman with her basket on her head is Josette, a neighbour, of Arbon.

While the majority of the critics were seeking in vain for the interest the painter could possibly have found in this banal scene which, they said, was only worthy of the daguerreotype, his admirers found in it more ideas than, we may hope, Courbet had tried to express in it. Let us take a few quotations from Proudhon to recreate the intellectual atmosphere in which, henceforth, the artist was to live. "We are very far removed in this picture from the bedizened peasants of L. Robert, and perhaps even farther from the proud republicans depicted by Rembrandt and Van der Helst. . . . There is no pose here, no flattery, not the smallest suspicion of an idealized figure. The whole thing is true, plucked straight from the heart of Nature. . . . But if you stop for a moment to

consider the realistic handling of common things, you will soon feel that beneath them is hidden a profound quality of observation which, in my view, is the very head and front of art." And Proudhon goes on to prove this profound quality of observation by tracing the physical and moral character of every person in the picture. "The man with the pig" he said, for example, "is exactly defined by his dress. He is a little peasant proprietor, who from the beginning of spring thinks only of laying up provisions against the winter. He served his term in 1793, and has seen the Rhine: it was there he got the habit of smoking. . . . When he returned to his native country he took up the life of the peasant once more. . . . However, make no mistake about it, though you see him busy with his pig, gripping his pipe between his teeth, he is a fellow of firm, settled convictions, etc., etc. . . ." "Les Paysans" was formerly in the Durand-Ruel collection. It was sold in 1896 for 16,600 francs, and has recently appeared again in the public auction rooms.



VII. LES PAYSANS DE FLAGEY. (Peasants of Flagey.)

PLATE VIII. L'APOTRE JEAN JOURNET (JEAN JOURNET, THE APOSTLE)

"I HAVE just painted a portrait of a famous eccentric, Jean Journet, the apostle," wrote Courbet in 1850. "It is like 'Marlborough s'en va-t en guerre.' Journet is so well known in Paris that they had to place a gendarme by the picture during the exhibition."

Courbet's model was an old carbonaro, who had originally taken refuge in Spain, and had then set up as a chemist at Limoux, and had finally come to Paris to convert the city to the doctrines of Fourier and universal peace. His career as an evangelist, interrupted for a time by an enforced stay at Bicêtre, was fertile in incidents, which have been turned to account in the works of Schanne and Mürger.

It is not known what has happened to the picture that was in the Salon of 1850, but its memory is preserved by a lithograph published by Vion in the same year. There is a plaintive poem, sung to the air of Joseph, which commemorates the apostle's wrath in the modern Babylon:

. . . In the stews what did I see ?
Oh, misery !
More crimes than I can tell
In this abyss of wretchedness
And wickedness
I found myself in Hell.

. . . And the rich were languishing
(Oh! woe to sing!)
In sodden slothful sleep

I saw the poor, sublimely meek,
The poor and weak
Unending vigil keep.

. . . And I saw young women lay,
Tenderly they
Their love before vile men;
I saw a mother give her child,
Poor and beguiled,
Tears for its food—oh! men!

And I saw the fallen sell,
Angels in Hell,
Their treasure in the street,
I saw the body's purity
Suffered to be
Prey to foul lust, lust's meat.

. . . Now, for the weary and worn
Lo! comes the dawn
To bring you happiness,
The Lord to us inclines His will,
His justice still
Shall sure redeem and bless.



Lith. T. ... le quai 21

L'APÔTRE JEAN JOURNET

Partant pour la conquête de l'harmonie universelle.

VIII. JEAN JOURNET. (Lithograph.)

PLATE IX. LES CASSEURS DE PIERRES
(THE STONE-BREAKERS)

WHEN he bade old Gagey, the road-mender, to his Ornans studio, in order to paint him just as he had seen him one day in November, 1849, on the road from the Château de Saint-Denis, Courbet probably had no notion of "raising the social question," as he pretended to do later on; but we know from his correspondence with Francis Wey that he was not only struck by the picturesque qualities of the scene. "Here is an old man of seventy, bending over his work, with his hammer raised, his body burned by the sun, his face shaded with a wide straw hat; his coarse stuff breeches are all patched; and his heels are showing through his stockings, which once were white, in his broken old wooden shoes; near him is a young man with his hair thick with dust and his skin burned brown; his filthy ragged shirt shows his sides and his arms; a leather belt supports what is left of his trousers, and his muddy leather shoes are full of gaping holes. The old man is kneeling; the young man is standing behind him, holding a basket of broken stones. Alas! In such low life this is the beginning and the end! . . . Rarely can one find so complete an expression of poverty and wretchedness." The picture was out of its element in the Salon of 1850-1851. "'The Stone-breakers,'" said Claude Vignon, "is a worthy companion to the 'Paysans de Flagey' in its coarse representation of coarseness and filth. And we are told that this is truth and naturalism! We do not admit such principles. For us the truth can never be trivial, and Nature, the divine mirror wherein the eternal beauty is reflected, stops short at ignobility."

Let us compare with this condemnation the more enlightened comment of Sabathier-Unger: "There is a bitter, though healthy, savour in this picture, which may be disagreeable to weak palates: it leaves an altogether rustic taste of salt bread in your mouth. . . . It is mercilessly naturalistic, but there is nothing vulgar in it, for, both in choice of subject and in the actual painting, there is rusticity, but nothing low, and if the types are emphasized almost to the point of caricature, they are nevertheless extremely powerful, and there is not the smallest hint of triviality in any portion of the picture; there is dignity and breadth in the painting of these ragged men."

"Les Casseurs de Pierres" was shown at Brussels in 1851, at the Universal Exhibition in 1855, and at the private exhibition in 1867, and everywhere gained adherents to Courbet's cause. It was bought in 1867 for 16,000 francs by Laurent Richard, a tailor, and in 1904 it was bought from the Binant collection by Herr von Seidlitz for the Dresden Museum at the price of 50,000 francs.



IX. LES CASSEURS DE PIERRES. (The Stone-breakers).

PLATE X. L'ENTERREMENT (THE FUNERAL)

COURBET'S good nature, his early successes, and perhaps also his boasting, had made him immensely popular at Ornans. The whole village may be said to have collaborated in his great picture, "L'Enterrement," which he began at the end of 1849. If the whole thing bears the stamp of truth it is to a certain extent because it never depended on the factitious aid of studio models in fantastic clothes. Thanks to Courbet's letters, and information gathered by G. Riat, we are able to see all Ornans filing in front of the painter's easel. The grave is dug beneath the Founèche, with the Mont and the Château in the background. From left to right, carrying the coffin, are Alphonse Bon, Promayet, the violinist, Etienne Nodier, and old Crevot; they are wearing the large felt hats lent by Alphonse Cuenot; the latter, for the ceremony. M. Bonnet, the curé, followed by Colart, the vine-grower, carrying the cross, and Cauchi, the sacristan, all consented to give a few sittings in their sacerdotal robes, while they discussed morals and philosophy with the artist. Behind old Cassard, the grave-digger, who is kneeling on one knee, are two red-nosed beadles, Muselier, the vine-grower, and Pierre Clément, the shoe-maker, who, by reason of their red robes and cocked hats, have often been taken for caricatures of magistrates.

Behind them the artist had to make room for the choristers. "I was told," wrote Courbet, "that they were very hurt, as they were the only people in the church who had been left out of the picture. They complained bitterly, saying that they had never done me any harm, and had not deserved such an affront."

In the crowd, standing up in the foreground, are Bertin, his face hidden behind his handkerchief, M. Proudhon, the deputy, cousin of the philosopher, the mayor, Prosper Teste, who "weighed four hundred kilos," and, escorted by a beautiful black and white brach, "two old men of the '93 revolution in the costume of the period."

In the background are the faces of Courbet's father and some of his friends, all of whose names are known.

On the other side, separated from the men, as was the custom, come the women in mourning garb. The painter's three sisters form a beautiful group—Juliette and Zélie standing one on each side of Zoé, who is weeping into her handkerchief.

Alas! The critics of the Salon, of whose opinions we have here set out a number of extracts, quite unexpectedly dashed the pride of all these obliging sitters. According to Champfleury there was a tremendous uproar, and, in spite of all the efforts of the artist and his sisters, the inhabitants of Ornans for a long time bore a grudge against Courbet for having exposed them on canvas to the mockery of the Parisians.



X. L'ENTERREMENT A ORNANS. (Funeral at Ornans.)

PLATE XI. L'ENTERREMENT (CONTINUED)
ADVERSARIES AND WAVERERS

L'ENTERREMENT " suddenly brought to a head the whole conflict of opinion concerning Courbet. "The artist," wrote Sabathier-Ungher, "has made a place for himself in the French school like a cannon ball crashing into a wall." To the majority of the public and the critics this masterpiece was only a piece of vulgar mystification and a lamentable lapse of taste.

The subject, it was said, was entirely unworthy of being treated on such a large scale. There was no perspective in it, no composition, no depth; the figures were drawn up in a line and set flatly against each other.

"However forbearing and indulgent the spectator may be," wrote Claude Vignon, "the impression produced is the same in every case; every one, from the most fantastic artist down to the most simple member of the public, turns away at once, saying: 'Good Lord! How ugly it is!'"

"It is impossible to know whether to laugh or cry," said Gautier. " . . . There are faces . . . which remind us of nothing so much as the pictures outside a tobacco shop or a menagerie in the queer crudity of drawing and colour."

"It is the glorification of vulgar ugliness!" wrote Clément de Ris. "It makes one shudder away from the thought of being buried at Ornas (Ornans)," cried Courtois. "It is an ignoble, impious caricature," declared P. de Chennevières.

L. de Geofroy, L. Peisse, Fabien Pillet, Pr. Haussard, G. Sand, were almost as severe, but there were a few who,

however much they might be upset by Courbet's æsthetics, were forced by the painter's manifest talent to make important concessions.

Delécluze, for instance, though he was disgusted by the two beadles, profoundly admired the group of weeping women on the right, and concluded: "In the picture, which might easily be taken for a badly developed daguerreotype, there is the natural crudity which is always the result of taking Nature at first hand. . . . In spite of the gross defects which spoil M. Courbet's huge picture, there are certain very solid qualities in it, and parts of it are too well painted for anyone to believe in the ignorance and rawness affected by this artist."

Paul Mantz was willing to let "L'Enterrement" pass on condition that it were not emulated by a school. "It should remain," he said, "the Pillar of Hercules of realism. It will never be surpassed, and the picture . . . will remain henceforth for posterity, like those mists which hover over deep and dangerous places and from afar warn ships that have lost their way to seek a safer track."



XI. L'ENTERREMENT (LES PORTEURS.)
The Funeral—(The Bearers.)



PLATE XII. L'ENTERREMENT (CONCLUDED) THE ARTIST'S PARTISANS

COURBET'S friends vigorously joined issue with the detractors of "L'Enterrement." Champfleury wrote several articles defending the picture figure by figure. Less well-known, though perhaps better inspired, was the panegyric of Sabathier-Ungher:

"Since the "Naufrage de la Méduse" nothing more powerful . . . or more original has been done in France. . . .

You say that the picture is trivial. It is our civilization which is trivial and brutal, that bids common men attend the worship of the dead. The grotesque has no more room in Courbet's picture than it has in life. Beside the handful of mercenaries, whom custom has made indifferent, and the listless spectators, he has painted the calm dignity of the priest performing his sacred rite, the heartrending grief of the relations and friends. . . . People have laughed at the cocked hats, gaiters and blue stockings of the two old peasants. Are they, for the antiquated fashion of their clothes, less contemplative and pitiful, or less noble or simply and humanly compassionate?"

Parts of this picture are worthy of Titian or Zurbaran in the severity of their colour, the large simplicity of their drawing, the firmness of their design, the gravity of the attitudes of the figures. . . . There is no man living who can handle colour with more unity or more homogeneously manipulate light and shade. . . .

"It is not an easy thing to lend dignity and style to these modern costumes. I use the word 'style' deliberately; I cannot find a single scamped detail; the form is always full and ample, and anything angular or awkward in our clothes is easily lost in the massing of the groups, which

are bathed in a sombre harmonious tone. I maintain that, far from having lapsed into vulgarity and materialism, M. Courbet has idealized and given style to his subject, as far as possible. . . .

"This picture vulgar! Just look at the solemn lowering landscape, the gloomy sky from which there seems to come a funereal harmony, the mysterious bars of this lugubrious song of death. The very grass grows sadly on the hills . . . and the sun will soon leave the earth into which the corpse is to be lowered, there for ever to remain . . . And the image of Christ crucified dominates the whole scene. In a century or two M. Courbet's picture will find a place in some great gallery. . . . It will be a classic!"

L'Enterrement did not have to wait so long to find the place which was its due. It was rejected by the Universal Exhibition of 1855, exhibited in the Avenue Montaigne in the same year, and, in 1882, was given by Mlle Juliette Courbet to the Louvre, where it is universally held to be one of the masterpieces of our time.



XII. L'ENTERREMENT (LES FEMMES.) The Funeral—(The Women.)

PLATE XIII. LES DEMOISELLES DE VILLAGE (VILLAGE GIRLS)

IF Courbet was not upset by all the clamour that went on about him certain criticisms had at any rate touched him nearly. He gave more thought to them than they deserved in the composition of "Les Demoiselles de Village" which he mentioned to Champfleury before the opening of the Salon of 1852: "I have bamboozled the judges by breaking new ground. I have painted a graceful, pretty picture. Nothing that they have said before is any good to them now. . . ."

Courbet himself was more than once "misled" by this fancied need for showing that he could paint "pretty pictures" as well as another. Sometimes he succeeded in disarming criticism, but, in 1852, these half-concessions only provoked a new chorus of raillery.

The landscape was considered a powerful piece of painting, but barren and attractive, "tainted with materialism."

The "girls" (Courbet's three sisters) were thought awkward, vulgar, stiff, dressed-up, and singularly lacking in charm. "What a good thing," some one said, "that they have hidden themselves away in such a barren spot!

M. Courbet is very unlucky not to have the acquaintance of any prettier girls than these! We must be grateful to him for not having shown us more than three!"

"I can understand," added the "Chronique de Paris," "a man treating human beings in this fashion, but what have the dogs done to deserve it? The dog in this picture is a horrid little mongrel . . . a disgrace to his mother. . . ." However it was admitted that the dog was well painted. As for the cows the general opinion

was (quite rightly) that they were Lilliputian and looked like cardboard toys.

"The painter deserved all this ridicule," said Alfred Grün, "for his Franche-Comté brutality, his audacity, his pride and his bad taste. But beneath all his violence, sincere or affected, beneath all his more or less wilful absurdity and awkwardness, it is impossible not to see and to admit his rare aptitude for seeing and rendering Nature. The valley is firmly painted, its light is free and true, and its fidelity to local atmosphere could hardly be surpassed. The cows only appear to be small because the artist has failed to make it clear that they are some distance away, and a detail so easy to correct as this does not justify the severity of the critics."

"Les Demoiselles de Village" was bought by the Duc de Morny, and was shown at the Universal Exhibition of 1855, and at the private exhibition in 1867. In 1876 it was sequestrated with the rest of Courbet's work and was with some difficulty restored to the Duchesse de Morny. It was subsequently acquired by M. Durand-Ruel, and has recently been sent over to America.



XIII. LES DEMOISELLES DE VILLAGE. (Village Girls.)

PLATE XIV. ENVIRONS D'ORNANS (NEAR ORNANS)

WE have already had glimpses of Courbet's native country in some of his pictures. But the scenery round Ornans supplied the painter with material for several hundred studies and pictures from beginning to end of his artistic career.

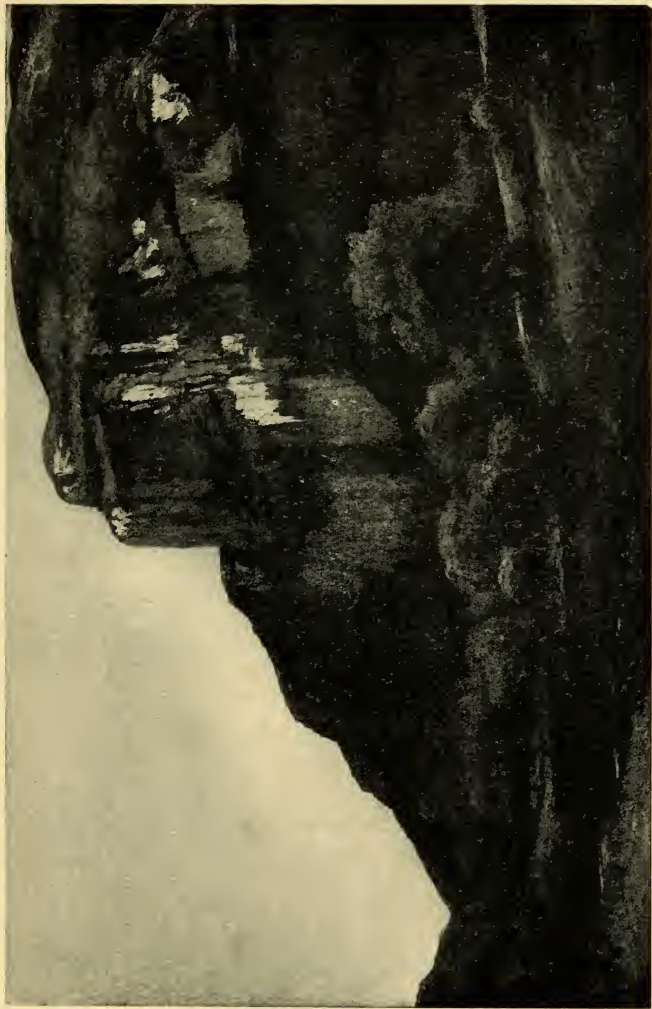
In Franche-Comté, where he never failed to go and stay between his periods of residence in Paris, or between excursions abroad, he loved to set up his easel before the wild valleys of the Loue or the streams of the Puits-Noir or Plaisir-Fontaine. Even in his school days, under the direction of Father Beau, his old drawing-master, he used to practise sketching the grottos, cascades, barren and wooded gorges, imposing groups of rocks, and it may be said that landscapes inspired by these familiar places appeared in his work throughout his career. Among the best known are the "Bords de la Loue," three pictures exhibited in 1849, 1852 and 1857 respectively, "Le Ruisseau du Puits-Noir" (1855), and "Le Ruisseau Couvert" (1865), now in the Louvre.

It was in 1850 that he painted—or rather, to use his own expression, "pargetted"—one of the most powerful of his landscapes, the cliff here reproduced, which was formerly in the Vollard collection.

It is something similar to another picture of the same period, the "Roche de dix Heures," à propos of which, Gautier, who was hardly sympathetically inclined to the artist, begged him to cultivate the "great landscape-painter" that was in him. "La Roche de dix Heures," he added in 1855, "is worth studying. An enormous mass

of sandstone, silvery in colour, flings a sharply defined black shadow across a vivid green field. Above the rock, through the trees, gleams a little patch of blue sky; there is in the picture a beautiful note of truth and a rare strength of colour."

It must be confessed that these numerous paintings of the scenery round Ornans are of very unequal merit. Beside a very few pictures of the first class we find countless repetitions of the same subject made heavy and opaque by the abuse of the palette knife. Collectors have always been a little chary of these pictures, which are for the most part only exercises, which the artist, even in his most distressful period, would never have sold, and which contain nothing of Courbet but the name.



XIV. ENVIRONS D'ORNANS. (Near Ornans.)

PLATE XV. LES BAIGNEUSES (WOMEN BATH-
ING)

DISCUSSION broke out afresh over the Salon of 1853 where "Les Baigneuses," "Les Lutteurs," and "La Fileuse" were shown.

The first of these pictures produced another scandal. It was in vain that the artist took the advice of his friends and covered the too opulent flesh of his central figure, for decency was declared to be outraged as much by the lapse of taste as well as by the unacademic figure. It is said that before the opening of the exhibition Napoleon III struck the picture contemptuously with his whip. The Empress was no less shocked. She had with difficulty been persuaded that the horses in Rosa Bonheur's "Marché aux Chevaux" could not have the elegant cruppers of the Andalusian steeds. "Is this also a picture of a mare?" asked the Empress, stopping in front of Courbet's "Women Bathing."

Mérimée circulated a quip which was no less successful by referring the judgment of the picture to M. Fleurant of the "Malade Imaginaire." Add to this the fact that Courbet had just been ill-advised enough to disclaim his position as a pupil of M. Hesse, and to declare himself the "pupil of Nature," and it is easy to imagine how this Nature who had proved herself such a poor instructress was taken to task.

However Champfleury, Proudhon and Courbet's friends were not alone in proclaiming the painter's talent. "This fellow is a sturdy artist!" cried Tassaert, the painter. And Paul Mantz, though he adjured Courbet to go no further, commended him for thus raising his voice against the decay of painting into neo-Greek academicism.

‘What can the painter have been driving at in exhibiting this amazing piece of anatomy?’ asked Gautier. ‘Has he been trying to protest against the white lies of the Paros and the Pentélique? Is it hatred of the Venus of Milo that has made him produce this filthy body from the black water!’ But, in spite of his dislike for this ‘obese creature with her uneven masses of fat,’ the great writer admitted that ‘monstrous figure does contain some very fine colouring and some firm, bold drawing. The water is perfectly transparent, most skilfully and simply painted; and the landscape is full of air and freshness, and this most unfortunate picture is proof positive of a great talent gone wrong.’

‘It is not so much a woman as a tree-trunk of flesh, a body covered with bark,’ said Edmond About. But this same About, though he denounced this ‘scandalous nude,’ bade posterity to the Louvre to admire the picture alongside the work of Dürer and Jordaens.

‘Les Baigneuses’ is not in the Louvre; the picture was bought by Bruyas, lent by him to various exhibitions and finally bequeathed to the Montpellier Museum.



XV. LES BAIGNEUSES. (Women Bathing.)

PLATE XVI. LES LUTTEURS (THE WRESTLERS)

IT will be remembered that in 1841 Courbet painted a "Classical Walpurgis Night." When the jury was so far rejuvenated as to allow the artist to exhibit the picture in 1848 it provoked this prophetic saying of Champfleury: "I say it now and bid you bear it in mind! This man, this unknown man who has painted the 'Nuit' will be a great painter."

We shall have plenty of opportunity for remarking on Courbet's sturdy confidence in his talent and he himself has authorized us to do so (in an unutterable conversation with M. de Nieuwerkerque), "the proudest man in France!" We must therefore observe in this instance that, in spite of Champfleury's eulogy, the very first, apparently, to appear in print, the artist set so little store by the picture that he painted it out one day in order to use the same canvas for another.

This picture was "Les Lutteurs" (in the Léon Hirsch collection at Chenonceaux). It was exhibited just above the "Baigneuses" in the Menu-Plaisir gallery, where the Salon was opened in May, 1853 (having previously been held in the Louvre and in the Palais Royal).

This strange picture is interesting and valuable inasmuch as it tells us how uncertain was the realist doctrine at that time. The top of the Arc de l'Etoile, just seen above the fence of the Hippodrome, tells us that the picture is intended to be modern. But against his open air setting, painted in recklessly with "insolent crudity" and relegated to the background, on a conventional piece of turf which seems to give very little support to the two wrestlers, the painter has built up two extremely academic figures,

under the purely factitious light of the studio. The shadows, according to "L'Artiste," are of a tone to delight the dealers in yellow cameos.

However the hand of a master is shown in the magnificent handling of the paint, the supple drawing, the bold foreshortening. But these qualities were not enough to redeem the picture. Delacroix, who did not care for "Les Baigneuses," found in "Les Lutteurs" the same lack of harmony between the central figures and the background, which "kills them, and ought to be cut away all round fully three feet." "Why look out for the ignoble?" cried Boyeldieu d'Auvigny. "A repulsive picture," said Horsin-Déon "the presence of which in the Salon is inexplicable!"



XVI. LES LUTTEURS. (The Wrestlers.)

PLATE XVII. LA FILEUSE ENDORMIE (THE SLEEPING SPINNER)

“‘**L**A FILEUSE’ will save Courbet’s exhibit,” wrote Champfleury to Max Buchon before the opening of the Salon of 1853. The picture did not meet with the same hostility as the other two and all those who were alive to the painter’s qualities seized the opportunity to pay him their compliments, all, however, more or less reserved.

“In this picture,” wrote Delacroix in his diary, “there is all the accustomed vigour and imitative quality of this artist. If the dress and the armchair are heavy and clumsy, the spinning wheel and the distaff are admirable.”

“It is a sincere, frank piece of work,” wrote H. de la Madelène, “which cannot alarm anybody and must charm many. . . . The girl is not a coquette and she is rather heavily wrapped up in her wide fichu and her red-flowered dress, but, thank God, she is not a Parisienne, and for that I applaud the painter. . . . Other people will complain no doubt that the Spinner is no more like a Greek or a Georgian woman. Good Heavens! We have only too many of your painters of Greek women and we are very lucky to have a man who is trying to paint peasant women as God made them! The eye can rest and gaze on this picture with the same pleasure that one finds in life when one leaves the company of artificial people and lights upon a simple, genuine human being.”

Proudhon also was delighted with the artist for having painted neither a goddess, nor a Greek, nor a fashionable doll, nor a Florian shepherdess, but a really “physiological beauty, full-blooded, alive, strong and tranquil.” With many philosophical divagations he admires the

“magnificent creature. . . . The thread has fallen from her hand. Almost we can hear her slow breathing instead of the whirring of the wheel. Every day she rises early in the morning; she is the last to go to bed. . . . It is in her spare moments that she takes her distaff, and turns to the gentle slow work, the slight noise of which is not enough to keep her, healthy countrywoman that she is, awake. Do you understand now why Courbet made his spinner a mere peasant? There would be no sense in her otherwise; more than that, I say she would be indecent. . . . Only the truth, discarding every impure thought, could here suggest both an idea and an ideal, without which art is reduced to arbitrariness and insignificance and disappears.”

“La Fileuse” has often been shown in public, notably at the Universal Exhibition of 1855 and the private exhibition of 1867. It was given by Bruyas to the Montpellier Museum.



XVII. LA FILEUSE. (The Spinner.)

PLATE XVIII. BAUDELAIRE

COURBET had a horror of "bespoke" portraits. "Women," he said, "want images without shadows; men want to be dressed up in their Sunday best. It would be much better to do navy's work than to earn money in that way; at least one would not have bartered away his thoughts."

There was left him therefore only one honourable way of painting portraits, which was to take his friends as models, those of his friends who shared his realistic æsthetic ideas.

Unfortunately the æsthetic ideas of his friends were apt to crumble away when they themselves sat for him and they complained of their portraits like the most ordinary people. "They were not beautiful," cried poor Courbet, "I could not make them beautiful!"

Among the malcontents was Baudelaire who is depicted in a strange canvas of this period which is now in the Montpellier Museum with the Bruyas collection. Does the fault lie with the capricious lighting which casts a brilliant illumination on to the poet's brow, and most disrespectfully fastens on to the end of his nose, and leaves his mobile changeful face, the despair of all painters, in shadow? Or was it the unstudied character of the composition that did not satisfy the model? It is very certain that the picture gave him very little pleasure.

Charles Baudelaire was two years younger than Courbet and had joined forces with him in very early days. We know that the author of "Fleurs du Mal" and the translator of Edgar Poe was also upon occasion an authoritative critic of art. He may be said to have been a partisan of Courbet's even before he knew him, for he finished his famous article on the Salon of 1845 with

these words: "This man will be the painter, the real painter, who will seize upon the epic side of real life, and in colour and design make us see and understand how great and poetic we are in our cravates and polished boots. May the true seekers next year give us the singular joy of the advent of the new!"

The two young men were at first very intimate. Courbet for some time lodged Baudelaire in his studio. But they soon wearied of each other's eccentricities. Did not the poet try to make his friend take down all the lucubrations that escaped him in his opium orgies?

In writing of the exhibition of 1855, Baudelaire compared the drawing of Ingres with that of Courbet, certainly not without malice aforethought, and distributed his ironical praises equally between the heroic traditionalism of the one and the naturalistic fanaticism of the other.



XVIII. BAUDELAIRE.

PLATE XIX. CHAMPFLEURY

MORE lasting was Courbet's friendship with Champfleury, whose portrait, painted in 1853, was bequeathed to the Louvre in 1889. Jules Husson, known as Fleury, or Champfleury, was born at Laon in 1821. He deserted his profession as a bookseller to devote himself to letters. His realistic romances, "Chien-Caillou," "Les Bourgeois de Molinchart," are often quoted and sometimes read. His historical works on caricature and ceramics are still useful.

Courbet's early pictures had no more ardent champion than Champfleury. But after "Les Baigneuses" he was less happy about it all. His anxiety did not appear in his articles, for he went on defending Courbet in public on every possible occasion. But in his private letters he often accuses the artist of having "gone astray," and wasting himself in trying to flatter or astonish the gallery, instead of being the frank, solid Franche-Comtéan of his early days.

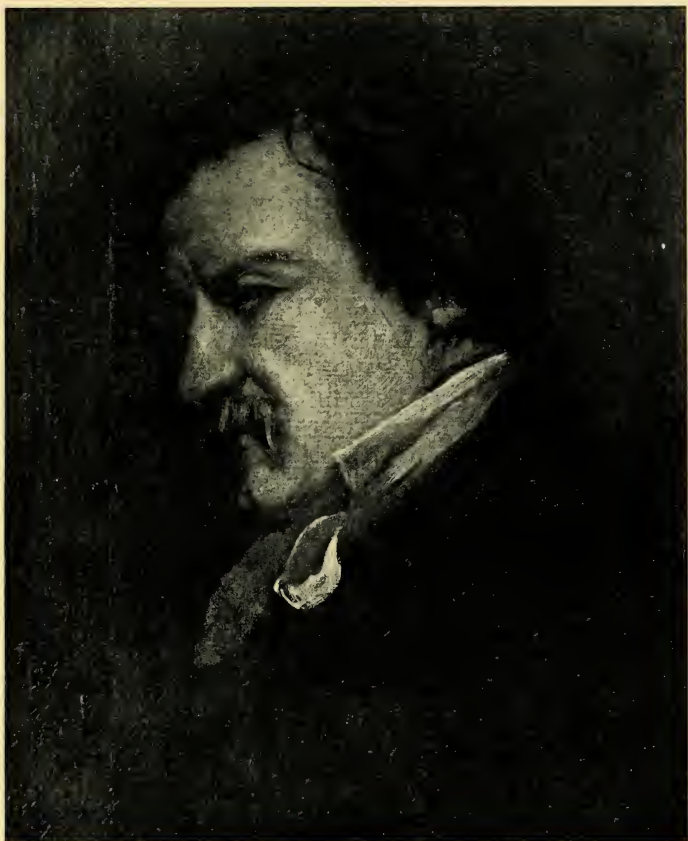
"Since his exhibition," he wrote to Max Buchon in 1855, "he has done nothing but haunt the cafés, preaching, staying up all night. . . . I am very sorry for his lack of good sense, for I love the man, but advice has no effect upon him. . . ."

"I am irritated by this comedy of realism," he confessed in the following year. "With regard to Courbet I am just like a cat running away with the saucepan of realism tied to his tail by horrid little street boys. . . ."

The admirable biographer of Courbet, M. Riat, who has published all these letters, deplores this misunderstanding and at the same time wonders whether the writer was not

moved by a spirit of petty jealousy. Champfleury, however, was always ready with praise whenever his friend gave him any opportunity for it. "I am delighted to know that Courbet is working," he wrote in 1864. "Being in the country is much better for him than the drinking-shops of Paris. The country will, I hope, make him forget all about his being the Saviour of the world through painting. He is a splendid, a magnificent, painter. If only he would be content to remain what Nature made him: an admirable painter!"

The breach was final in 1867: "One cannot work with a man and be with him eight hours a day without loving and understanding him. When I lost touch with Courbet it was because I sought isolation. I wanted to reflect, study, work, and try to improve myself. Courbet would not give up his nocturnal way of living. . . . At last I was forced to realize that, with all his magnificent gifts as a painter, he had stultified himself with beer. . . ." And Champfleury came to this hard conclusion: "I have begun to have doubts of his mental balance."



XIX. CHAMPFLEURY.

PLATE XX. PROUDHON ET SA FAMILLE (PROUDHON AND FAMILY)

ANOTHER writer figured in the artist's circle of friends from this time on. It was about 1848 that the painter met Pierre-Paul Proudhon, his compatriot (he was born at Besançon), and his elder by ten years. At that time, the celebrated socialist, who had become a deputy, after being in turn a drover, a waiter, a journeyman-printer and a clerk in a firm of tug-proprietors, had already published his famous works: "What is property?" (1840) and "The Solution of the Social Problem" (1848). He certainly developed Courbet's democratic aspirations and helped to make him a vociferous, if not a dangerous, revolutionary. Most of all to be regretted is the influence that Proudhon's mania for reading a moral into every one of the painter's pictures had in urging Courbet indulge in the thesis pictures of which at intervals he was guilty. There are only too many men of letters of our time who have deprived us of good painting or good sculpture by trying to transform many of our best craftsmen into "thinkers." When the misdeeds of these bad counsellors are written room will no doubt be found for Proudhon.

He had plenty of opportunity for discovering that his efforts had not succeeded in turning Courbet into a good logician. In 1863 the two men were collaborating in a philosophy of art. "It's marvellously funny," wrote Courbet with some justice. "I am swamped by manuscript; every day I write between five and ten pages of æsthetics. . . . We are at last going to have a real treatise of modern art, and the way, pointed out by me, is to run parallel with the Proudhonian philosophy."

The book was not published until after the death of Proudhon and was called: "The Principles of Art and its Social Purpose." Courbet's ideas do not seem to have occupied as much space in it as he had hoped. The philosopher was too little of an artist and the artist was too little of a philosopher for them not to exasperate each other when they discussed these matters. Sometimes Proudhon's expressed opinions of Courbet clearly reveal such exasperation.

The portrait of the Proudhon family has a complicated history. It was begun about 1853, taken up again from memory after the philosopher's death and exhibited, as here reproduced, in the Salon of 1865. But Mme Proudhon's face was painted in provisionally, until she could give him a sitting, which she never did, and it has since been erased. The picture was thought poor and dull and the adversaries both of the artist and the socialist writer joined in attacking it. It was sold for 1,500 francs in 1877 and was later given by Mlle Juliette Courbet to the citizens of Paris.



XX. PROUDHON ET SA FAMILLE. (Proudhon and Family.)

PLATE XXI. ALFRED BRUYAS

AMONG Courbet's most active partisans, Alfred Bruyas of Montpellier (1821-1876) calls for special mention. In Rome, whither his parents had sent him for the sake of his health, his compatriot, Cabanel, the painter, brought him in touch with the young artists of the Villa Medici, and it was there no doubt that he discovered his vocation as a Mæcenas. From that time on he set aside a portion of his large fortune for the formation of a collection of pictures by contemporary artists. By gift (1868) and by his will (1878) one hundred and forty-eight pictures collected by Bruyas were given by him to the Montpellier Museum. The whole French school of the time may be said to be represented in that eclectic collection, from David to Millet, including Géricault, Delacroix, Ingres, Tassaert, Corot, Diaz, Bonvin and many others.

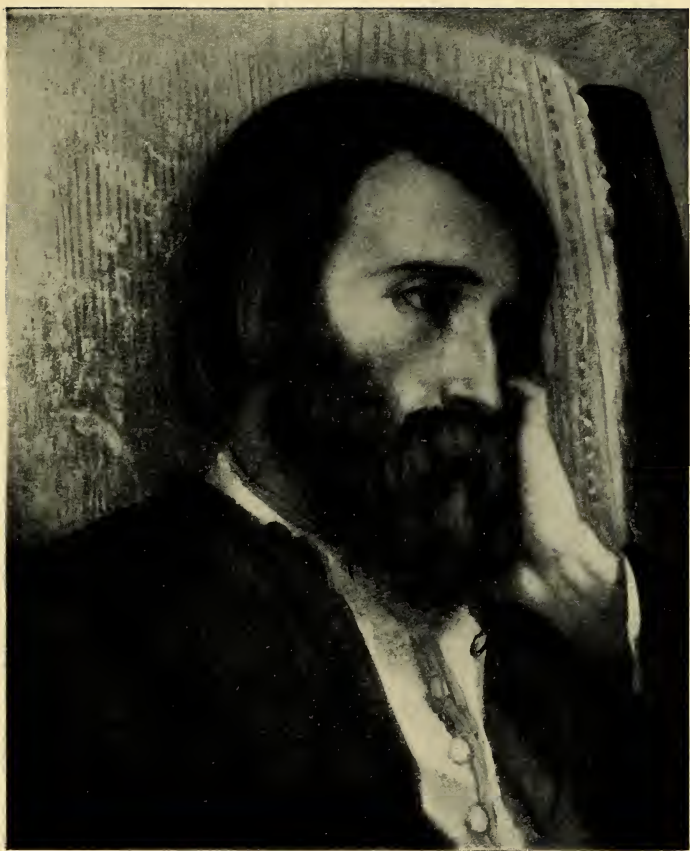
Courbet holds a privileged position since he is represented by thirteen pictures, including "L'Homme à la Pipe," "Les Baigneuses," "La Fileuse," "Baudelaire," "La Rencontre," and we must add three portraits of the donor, for it was one of his foibles to have himself painted as often as possible.

In 1857, Champfleury, who had stayed with him, published in the "Revue les Deux Mondes," much to Courbet's annoyance, a "Story of M. T.," in which those who knew had no difficulty in recognizing Bruyas and his Narcissus weakness. The patron of the arts was drawn to the life with his bright red beard and hair, his misty blue eyes and pale complexion. Champfleury maliciously belauded his aristocratic hands with the little finger curving out, and their precious intaglio rings, and their whiteness

which Bruyas loved to have admired. "He is discreet, solitary, melancholy," said the writer, "he has the soul of a pretty woman who is bored, combined with mysticism and sensuality."

Théophile Silvestre who, in 1876, published a fully annotated catalogue of the Bruyas collection, gives a much more flattering sketch of Courbet's patron. If he often had his portrait painted, he explains, it was because he wished to show, by letting many different painters use the same model, the craftsmanship and temperament of each of them.

So it is, according to Silvestre, that in his three portraits, in spite of his affection for Bruyas, Courbet put something of his own vanity and peasant cunning. But the collector gave his painters entire freedom. In one of his three portraits signed by Courbet he is represented with his hand on a pamphlet entitled: "A Study of Modern Art, and a Solution, by Alfred Bruyas." The "solution" consisted in opening his gallery to every talent without distinction.



XXI. ALFRED BRUYAS.

PLATE XXII. LA RENCONTRE (THE MEETING)

IN 1854 Courbet paid a long visit to Bruyas's house at Montpellier. He had just come back from Frankfurt, still bewildered by the discussion he had roused there. "At the Casino," he wrote to a friend, "they had to put up a notice to this effect: 'Any mention of M. Courbet's pictures is prohibited in this club.' One evening at a banker's house the guests found a ticket under their serviettes on which was written: 'This evening there will be no mention of M. Courbet.' "

On his arrival at Montpellier, Courbet, with his knapsack on his back, in his shirt sleeves, wearing blue cloth trousers, left the old yellow diligence and walked along the dusty road, sweltering under the brilliant sun. Bruyas, who had come to meet him, took off his hat to him, while his faithful servant, Calas, bowed respectfully and his dog, Breton, stayed at a distance. That is the meeting which Courbet painted soon afterwards at the painter's request, the picture which became so famous at the Universal Exhibition of 1855 under the nickname of "Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet" or "La Fortune saluant le Génie."

All that the public saw in it was the strangeness of the idea of blowing out such a simple incident to the proportions of a huge picture. The paragraphists of the newspapers and the December reviews found it an inexhaustible source of fun. People never met in the street without saying: "Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet." Quatrains and songs were passed from mouth to mouth and Banville in one of his "Odes funambulesques" led his readers through a desolate region, saying:

My friend, if I'm sad and so ugly to see
It's because M. Courbet has just passed through me.

while the chorus of grass and willows took up the refrain :

“Good day, Monsieur Courbet! How do you do ? ”

When the chorus of jokes had died down, the connoisseurs admired the boldness of the three portraits, the three figures set against the sky, and the intensity of the light and the truth of the setting. “Courbet,” said Théophile Silvestre, “ who has declared himself incapable of painting a landscape with which he was not familiar, has painted, and painted admirably, the landscape of this meeting, a landscape full of the difficulties of a country unknown to him, especially for him, accustomed as he is to the freshness of Franche-Comté and the changing cloudy skies of the north. . . . The vegetation dried by the wind, dusty with the traffic, vividly shown up in detail by the implacable brilliance of the blue, seemed to him the very negation of harmony. . . . Could anything be more difficult than to render the earth, almost as brilliant as the sky and the road from which the sunlight is thrown back while the shadows seem to be stamped into it ? ”



XXII. LA RENCONTRE. (The Meeting.)

PLATE XXIII. LES CRIBLEUSES DE BLÉ
(THE CORN SIFTERS)

THIS picture was sketched at Ornans at the end of 1853. The artist seems to have tried suddenly to break away from his usual technique. He substituted the brightest tonality for the black backgrounds which he had hitherto affected and from which he loved to flood his pictures with light. In a sunlit room, in which the sunbeams are playing on the newly whitewashed walls, he covered the floor with a large white cloth. In a corner there stand a few canvas sacks, half-full. The scattered grain, the wicker baskets, the copper cauldrons are all of singing gold. One of the two women is sitting picking corn in a china dish; kneeling down, Zoé Courbet, the artist's sister, dressed in a red gown, is shaking the sieve; a little boy is opening the lid of a box. The whole composition is in an absolutely unexpected key.

In spite of the deliberate banality of the composition, the laboured drawing, the deliberately ordinary form of the picture, it did not excite any indignation. It was merely treated with a rather patronizing indulgence.

"It is impossible to deny," said Ernest Gebaüer, "that M. Courbet has a very true feeling for certain scenes. "'Les Cribleuses de Blé' has a certain exact feeling for truth, but just as all truth is not meet to be said, so all truth is not meet to be painted. There is nothing sufficiently remarkable about this 'Cribleuses' to make us forget the prosaic character of the subject."

Théophile Gautier who asked nothing better than the chance of encouraging young artists was only half-convinced. "M. Courbet," he said, "sometimes does beautiful

work, simple, large and consistent from beginning to end. Unfortunately he negatives his qualities by a fatal fixed idea. However the 'Cribleuses de Blé' seems to us to give certain indications of improvement: the little girl in the red skirt who is shaking the sieve has a certain rustic grace; she has the truth of portraiture, not that of caricature."

The prudent Paul Mantz goes a little further than this in his admiration. "It is a mistake to overlook the 'Cribleuses' " (he said) "for there is in it a happy reminder of reality, and at the same time some bold and really skilful painting."

The picture was shown at many provincial exhibitions, notably at Nantes, where it was bought for 3,000 francs in 1861. In 1900 it was shown in the Centenary Exhibition of French Art.



XXIII. LES CRIBLEUSES DE BLE. (The Grain Sifters.)

PLATE XXIV. LE CHATEAU D'ORNANS (THE
CASTLE OF ORNANS)

TOGETHER with the "Cribleuses de Blé" and "La Rencontre," which, according to Courbet, was only grudgingly accepted, being thought "too personal and pretentious," the artist showed a portrait of a certain Spanish lady whom he had met at Lyons, in the Universal Exhibition of 1855. With these were also a few earlier pictures like the "Casseurs de Pierres," "Les Demoiselles de Village," "La Fileuse" and two self-portraits. Further he exhibited three Franche-Comté landscapes: "La Roche de dix Heures," "Le Ruisseau du Puits-Noir" (not to be confused with the picture of the same name in the Louvre), and "Le Château d'Ornans" here reproduced. This name, which set some of the critics carping, was used in his native country for the group of little houses built above the town on the sight of the old castle. They are perched high on the grey rock, above the moist green valley, and stand out against a setting boldly painted and infused with a tranquillity that is much less exceptional in the artist's work than might be supposed.

The picture was engraved by Gaujean and appeared in the "Gazette des Beaux-Arts" in 1878 and at that time belonged to Laurent Richard. It has since been taken to America.

In spite of this considerable exhibit Courbet was not so well represented as he could have wished. The jury of 1855 was less liberal than that of 1850 and rejected "L'Enterrement." It also refused a new picture "L'Atelier." It must be said that a few months before the artist had made good use of an opportunity for upsetting the

official circles. His own account of the matter is to be found in a letter to Bruyas, published in the "Artistic and Literary Archives," 1890-91.

Through the mediation of Chenavard and François, M. de Nieuwerkerque, Director of Fine Arts, had invited Courbet to a conciliatory luncheon. They were trying to "convert" the artist and make him "water his wine." He was promised in return a good position in the exhibition for any big picture he liked to submit to the scrutiny of an official committee. Courbet responded to the invitation in a manner that broke off all negotiations. It was all to no purpose that they exhorted him to show some consideration for the governing body: "I am my own governing body," he replied. After assuring the Director that he bore him no ill-will Courbet told his colleagues that they were a couple of idiots. "Never mind," he said, "Let's go and drink a glass of beer."

Courbet bore no grudge against these men for their unsuccessful attempts to be of service to him.



XXIV. LE CHATEAU D'ORNANS. (The Castle, Ornans.)

PLATE XXV. L'ATELIER (THE STUDIO)

A SHORT time before the opening of the exhibition at the beginning of 1855, Courbet suddenly remembered M. de Nieuwerkerque's friendly attitude towards him, and wrote a long urgent letter to his friend Français, asking him to obtain a few small favours for him from the governing body. He wanted an extra time allowance of a fortnight before he had to send in the great picture on which he was at work. "It is a picture about the size of 'L'Enterrement,' if not larger, with thirty life-size figures. I have had three months wasted by illness. . . . Perhaps you would like to know the subject of my picture; it would take so long to explain that I leave it to you to guess when you see it; it is the history of my studio, and all its moral and physical happenings. It is rather mysterious, and he must read the riddle who can." (From the collection of artists' autograph letters in the Doucet library.)

The title of the picture did not throw much light on the picture: "The Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory Setting Forth a Seven Years' Phase of My Artistic Life." It is necessary to consult the information collected and annotated by G. Riat to find any interpretation of the various intentions concealed in this strange picture.

In the middle of his studio the artist is painting a Franche-Comté landscape under the admiring gaze of a little shepherd boy and a nude woman. (The symbol of Courbet's personal and realistic art.)

In the group on the left a poacher and his dog (Hunting) are gazing contemptuously at a sombrero, a guitar and a dagger (Romantic Poetry). Further back a skull on the

"Journal des Débats" symbolizes the Press, while Poverty is incarnate in an Irishwoman grovelling on the floor. A lay figure, loosely tied to a post, represents Academic Art, while in the middle distance Oudot, the vine-grower (Work), is surrounded by a mob of the exploiters of humanity; a Jewish broker (Commerce), a clown (the Theatre), a priest (the Roman Catholic Religion), and a prostitute (Pleasure). A careful scrutiny reveals figures representing Jewish Religion, Death, Unemployment, etc. . . .

On the right are the friends and champions of the artist, some of them anonymous, like the family in the foreground, who represent society patrons of the arts, or the couple embracing by the window (Free Love); but we are able to recognize Baudelaire (Poetry), Champfleury (Prose), Proudhon (Social Philosophy), Promayet (Music), Max Buchon (Realistic Poetry), and Bruyas (the Mæcenat of Realistic Painting).

Only Courbet could have imagined that people would take the trouble to decipher this extraordinary logograph. In spite of its admirable qualities the picture was rejected by the exhibition, and the artist had to find some other way of showing his work to the public.



XXV. L'ATELIER. (The Studio.)

PLATE XXVI. L'ATELIER (CONTINUED)

THE refusal of "L'Enterrement" and "L'Atelier" roused in Courbet a desire that he had long cherished, for the organization of a private exhibition of his pictures. Bruyas, to whom he looked for financial support, had till then only been mildly enthusiastic about the project. But that was a mere trifle to Courbet. With unshakeable serenity and optimism he told Bruyas that he had been "unable any longer to resist the urgent entreaties of his friends, and that the private exhibition was to be held at 7 Avenue Montaigne. It will cost me between ten and twelve thousand francs. I have taken the rooms for six months at a rent of two thousand francs. Alterations will cost between six and eight thousand. The odd thing is that the gallery is in the same building as their exhibition. . . . I have already the six thousand francs you gave me. If you will show your gratitude for what you owe me, and let me have 'Les Baigneuses,' I shall be safe; I shall make at least 100,000 francs."

After several weeks of peevish excitement and enthusiasm and "ecstasies" over his own monument, Courbet opened the doors on June 28, 1855. Above the entrance was the following inscription:

"Realism."

G. Courbet.

Exhibition of 40 Pictures.

Entrance Fee: 1 franc.

The plan of holding a private exhibition outside the Salons was in those fortunate times an amazing novelty. Gautier was astonished at seeing Realism in a shed,

and Maxime du Camp was shocked at seeing the artist's advertisements on the back page of the newspapers between disinfectants and sarsaparilla. Paul Mantz, with his usual sagacity, touched the heart of the matter: the artist was fully within his rights in exhibiting his work at his own risk and peril, since the jury had refused a picture that was "sincerely and honestly painted, and full of fine qualities."

On the subject of this important picture Delacroix, who was far from sympathizing with Courbet, is even more explicit. He did not care for the composition of the picture, and he objects to the landscape on which the painter is engaged almost as vigorously as to the figures in the studio. But he cannot find praise enough for the model, one of the finest nudes that Courbet ever painted. "One of the most singular pictures of our time was refused," he says in his diary, "but the artist is not the kind of man to be discouraged by such a trifle."



XXVI. L'ATELIER. (The Studio—A Fragment.)

PLATE XXVII. COURBET AU COL RAYE
(COURBET WITH A STRIPED COLLAR)
A STUDY FOR "L'ATELIER"

" **T**HIS study of Courbet's head by Courbet for a picture by Courbet is one of his best pieces of work; and it is incontestably stronger than 'L'Homme à la Pipe,' another fine Courbet. This fine profile was painted at Montpellier, at M. Bruyas's, during the happiest time of the painter's life, when he had still some self-control, though he was even then inclined to fling himself into any new absurdity that cropped up. . . .

" It really is a fine profile, a genuine Courbet! The real, the only, the unique Courbet of those days! Still simple, still rejoicing in everything, above all in being Courbet; sometimes witty without the least spark of culture, almost charming, even in his egoistic rodomontades. Ah! What a fine fellow he was in his natural boorishness and his heavy-handed malice; still temperate, not in speech, but in appetite, and comparatively respectable, though already a haunter of cafés, a fly-by-night, too noisy and full of laughter, roaring with laughter, laughing at nothing, at everything, shouting with laughter, so that you could sometimes hear him from the gate to the Castle of Peyrou, and from one end to the other of the Esplanade.

" He had a most attractive face, in spite of his low forehead, and his conical head, that looked as though it had been moulded in Ingres's skull-cap, or the broad-brimmed hat of Ulysses. Yes: this picture of Courbet as he was then, so finely and firmly drawn, is worthy of Velasquez, though it is painted with a violent egoism, quite startling

in some of its details. . . . Perhaps Courbet stripped his neck in preparation for the Fair Unknown who should be yearning for him, crazy about his work, the woman he had sought in Paris, though she never existed, save in his imagination and the jest of one of his friends who was pulling his leg.

"But then Courbet had so many reasons for loving himself, infinitely more than he knew himself. His fame, first of all; his ideas; his mirror; a white skin, of a beautiful soft texture and a swarthy tinge, as yet uncoarsened; very fine features, a straight nose, velvety eyes, a small ear . . . and silky hair, black as a crow's wing. . . . In a word, this beautiful, memorable profile is Courbet, the ineffable Courbet. . . . With a few technical reservations, especially as regards intelligence and taste, this picture may be said to be the very top of the presumptuous talent which has been so justly belauded, in spite of its distressing weaknesses."

Théophile Silvestre's malicious commentary adds so much vitality to the splendid portrait in the Bruyas collection that we may be pardoned for having quoted it in full.



XXVII. COURBET AU COL RAYÉ.
(Courbet in a Striped Collar.)

PLATE XXVIII. L'ATELIER (CONCLUDED). LA
BAIGNEUSE ENDORMIE (THE SLEEPING
BATHER)

THE strange thing about the exhibition of 1855 is that the artist himself repudiated the label with which he had ticketed it. "The word realist," he said in the preface to his catalogue which he drew up with the help of Castagnary, "has been forced on me as the word romantic was forced on the men of 1830. Such titles have never given a just idea of the work to which they are attached; if they could and did, then there would be no need for pictures." And when he looks round for a formula with which to explain his intentions he can find nothing more exact than this: "To endeavour to translate the manners, ideas, the aspect of my generation, to set them forth as they have seemed to me, to be not only a painter but also a man, in a word, to create a living art, that is my aim."

The sound doctrine underlying this manifesto was given a form so confused that it could not but strengthen the eternal misunderstanding (which still subsists) between the partisans and the adversaries of realism.

The heated arguments that took place on varnishing day were, according to those who were present, irresistibly comic: classics and moderns, bohemians and respectable persons, looked each other up and down for a space, and then gradually carried the dispute to such a pitch of fury that Champfleury—who must have heard many such discussions—went home in dismay, feeling that "he knew nothing at all about art."

The following days were less amusing: visitors became

fewer and fewer, and though the entrance fee was reduced to fifty centimes, Realism made no more money. Poor Courbet was very far indeed from the 100,000 francs he had counted on.

We cannot leave the 1855 exhibition without comparing the beautiful nude of the "Atelier" with a study which is worthy of such a comparison in its masterly freedom, its supple handling, the brilliant freshness of its modelling. It is not known for certain that it was hung by the great picture in the exhibition in the Avenue Montaigne, for it is not easy to identify Courbet's innumerable bathers and sleeping women, but it clearly belongs to the same period, and was obviously painted from the same model.



XXVIII. BAIGNEUSE. (The Bather—A Study.)

PLATE XXIX. MME MARIE CROcq

WHEN Courbet made his next public appearance in 1857, he had at least acquired a reputation as an incomparable craftsman. But the critics seem to have used the word expressly to deny him any higher ambition.

"To M. Courbet," said Georges Niel, "life is materialistic; he sees the outward form, and not the soul."

"If material cleverness were enough in art," wrote Maxime du Camp, "M. Courbet would deserve nothing but praise, for he paints materially a no man has painted in France these many years. . . . His hand is incredibly skilful, but he is absolutely lacking in soul. Whatever his subject may be, it is always still-life."

"His brush work is bold and vigorous, his colour is solid, his modelling is sometimes astonishing," said Castagnary, who was soon to become the painter's most devoted admirer, "he paints excellently what he sees. But he does not go beyond that. . . ."

Even more severe was W. Flauer, who declared: "M. Courbet is no more a painter than a man who employs a builder is an architect. His distinguished use of the trowel has been amply recognized, and I am quite ready to admit that his paint is well mixed. But that is not even the beginning of craftsmanship, and even perfect craftsmanship does not make an artist."

". . . If he paints a head," said Zacharie Astruc, "you can take hold of the nose with your fingers, and play with the modelling of the face. . . . His pictures are well-built monuments. . . . But they are always careless and reckless in the matter of composition."

About devoted a most interesting essay to Courbet's

technique; it is very long, and deserves more than this summary quotation. Courbet, he said, "hurls himself at Nature like a glutton; he grabs great pieces of it, and gulps them down without chewing them, like an ostrich. He grasps Nature not in her most intimate aspect, but in her most obvious. . . . His theory might be formulated in these words: One thing in Nature is as good as another for a painter. In his practice of this theory he paints studies, not pictures. . . . True, loyal, powerful, solid, M. Courbet has gone further than any of his contemporaries in his vigorous expression. His pictures have all the sublimity of still-life illusion; but since, in spite of his great talent, he remains a very ordinary draughtsman, he unconsciously dispenses with all the subtleties of art."

In the light of these opinions let us consider a picture painted at this time (1857), the portrait of Mme Marie Crocq, which seems most masterly in its vivid, powerful craftsmanship. Nothing much is known of the history of the picture. It appeared, we believe, in the artist's private exhibition in 1867, under the title of Mme M . . . C . . . It was formerly in the Durand-Ruel collection, but is now in Brussels.



XXIX. MME. MARIE CROCQ.

PLATE XXX. LES DEMOISELLES AU BORD DE
LA SEINE (YOUNG WOMEN BY THE SEINE)

THIS picture takes us to the neighbourhood of Bougival, though it was at Ornans, whither the artist went to forget all the worries of his exhibition, that the first sketches for his "Demoselles du Bord de la Seine" were made in 1856. The picture was finished in Paris in the following year, and shown at the Salon.

If we were able to follow Proudhon we should discover all sorts of social, moral, and psychological meanings in this picture; we should find in it the condemnation of the Second Empire; we should see in the dark beauty in the foreground a Phaedra dreaming of Hippolytus, a creature of passion now concentrated, now bursting all bounds, never sated, a vampire! We should be tempted at the cost of our very life blood to put out the fire that consumes her! We should then fly to escape the metamorphosis with which this Circe threatens us. We should see in her golden-haired friend a coldly ambitious woman, skilled in the art of investment and speculation. . . . But we should need to expand this note to thrice its length if we were to say everything that Proudhon so easily read into this vigorous piece of painting.

Maxime du Camp's commentary tackles the picture more closely. "Les Demoiselles . . ." he said, "are two women who no doubt set out from the Rue de Lourcine in the morning and will return there in a week. They are lying on the grass by the river. One of them is leaning against a tree and dozing, with her flabby face resting on her fleshy hand; the other is lying flat on her stomach,

with her greenish unwholesome face and impudent eyes looking out of the picture. . . . These two creatures, more than doubtfully drawn, look like a bundle of clothes, very well painted, with arms and heads sticking out of them. They have no bodies . . . only deflated balloons. The arm of the woman lying down, and the shawl which covers the absent parts of her body, are masterpieces of skill, and prove that, but for M. Courbet's prepossessions, he might be a serious painter. By way of establishing a harmony with his greenish foreground, M. Courbet has painted the Seine blue! A blue Seine! In the muddy outskirts of Paris! O Realism, is this thy reality? "

We may cut short the traditional apostrophes of those who waxed wrath over the artist's new "departure," and the lamentations of those who deplored his misled talent. A remark made by Fould, the Minister of State, as he left the Salon, expresses the official attitude with more authority: "Art," he said, "is on the downward path when it deserts the pure and lofty regions of the beautiful, and the traditional paths of the great masters, and follows the directions of the new school of realism and seeks to do no more than a slavish imitation of the least poetic and noble elements of Nature. . . ."



XXX. LES DEMOISELLES AU BORD DE LA SEINE.
(Young Women by the Seine.)

PLATE XXXI. CHIENS ET LIEVRE (DOGS AND HARE)

IN the Salon of 1857 Courbet had also, besides a landscape and two portraits, two hunting scenes, the first of a series which he continually extended. "La Biche Forcée à la Neige" (in the Douville-Maillefeu collection) has often been reproduced. Against the vast stretch of snow, pierced by rust-coloured bushes, the beast, a magnificently coated creature, is shown dying in the foreground. In the distance there are five exasperatingly absurd dogs, absurd in form, colour, and movement. They are so absurd that one cannot object to the critics who refused to make any allowance for them.

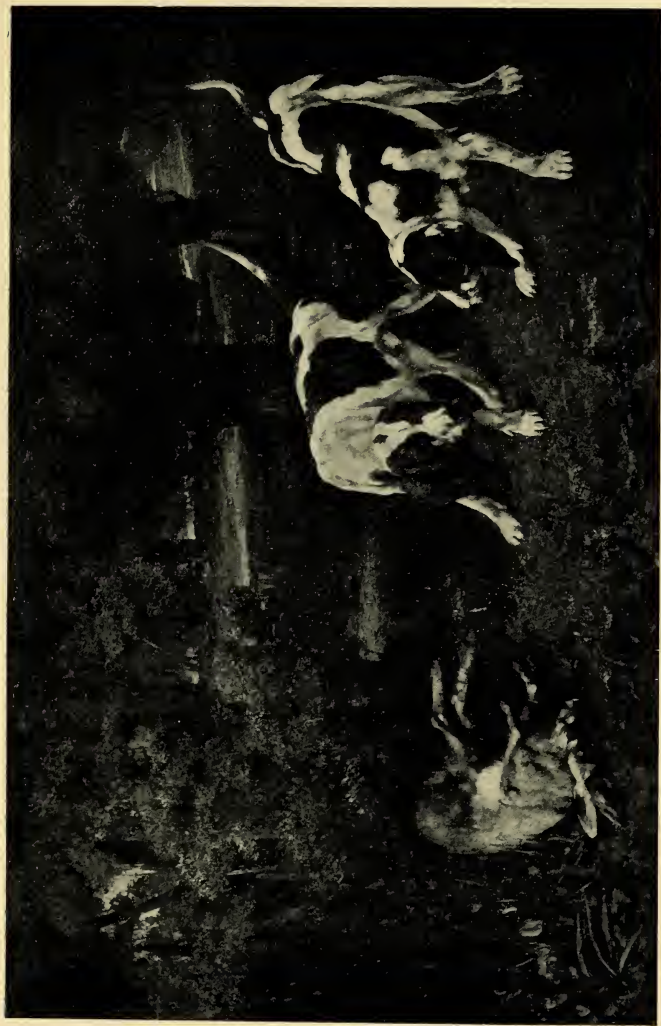
"La Curée du Chevreuil," also called "Chasse au Chevreuil dans les Forêts du Grand Jura," on the other hand, was justly admired. The picture was sold for 8,000 francs to M. Vanisack, of Antwerp, by him given to M. Luquet, and sold in 1866 for 25,000 francs to the Alston Club, of Boston. Judging by the lithographs of Celestin Nanteuil and Emile Vernier, it must be one of the painter's masterpieces.

In a wood of tall pines the deer is shown hung by its feet from a tree. In the delicate handling of the pelt, and the magnificent poise and weight of the body, the painter has created an admirable still-life. Standing up in a blouse, shoulders back, gaitered, with arms folded, Courbet is listening to the huntsman sounding his horn. Two dogs, dappled with brown spots, are bounding towards the stag. The picture is one of animal vigour and religious grandeur.

About, Gautier, Maxime du Camp, Castagnary, all

praised the picture as it deserved; though, of course, not without certain reservations with regard to detail. Castagnary, for instance, was surprised that dogs, with the bodies of bassets, should have the coats of brachhounds, and About, who acknowledged their coarse quality of life, and admired the "powerful, skilful painting," seems to be thinking wistfully of the dogs of Desportes. But we have every reason to suppose that such cavilling was only introduced into their notices to avoid breaking away from their settled habit of criticizing Courbet.

The two dogs of the "Curée" are shown, identically reproduced in the splendid picture here reproduced, which a short time ago left the Durand-Ruel collection for New York. The pine woods have become an oak forest; the huntsmen have disappeared; the stag has been replaced by a hare. But the two dogs are just the same, and give us no reason to think regretfully of the exact Desportes, nor of the work of any more powerful animal painter since his time.



XXXI. CHIENS ET LIEVRE. (Dogs and Hare.)

PLATE XXXII. CHASSEURS EN FORET
(SPORTSMEN IN A WOOD)

ANOTHER fault found with Courbet, with regard to his hunting series, was particularly unfortunate. About accused him of not knowing how to hold a horn, and Maxime du Camp suspected him of not knowing that hunting in the snow had been prohibited in 1844. "It is no great matter," he added, "but I understood that the realists only painted what they saw."

In these pictures Courbet painted not only what he saw, but what he lived. He was a great hunter, and even, as he says in one of his letters, "an incorrigible poacher." In the year 1853 he came into conflict with the police, after having walked over the whole countryside, "over hills and valleys; up to his thighs in snow," after hares and wolves.

In 1859, at Frankfort, he distinguished himself by his prowess, of which he was no less proud than of his fame as a painter. On Saint-Sylvestre's day he had a "superb adventure," which he recounted to his sister Juliette as follows: "In the mountains of Germany I killed an enormous stag, a stag of twelve points. . . . It is the largest that has been killed in Germany for twenty-five years. He weighed, with an empty stomach, 274 pounds; in summer, alive, he would have weighed 400 pounds. The whole of Germany is jealous of my adventure. The Grand Duke of Darmstadt said he would have given a thousand florins for it not to have happened. . . ." The Society of Sportsmen had to intervene to restore the head of the beast to him, for it had been taken from him. "It is a splendid story; the whole town has been

agog with it for a month. The newspapers took it up. . . . On top of it all, a sportsman gave a dinner at which 700 glasses of Bavarian beer were drunk."

However, Castagnary was sometimes right in saying that Courbet's landscapes seemed to have been seen from the windows of a tavern: "His scenes always give one the idea of a jolly good meal; one thinks of fried fish whisking down his streams and all around, along his thickets, there hovers the scent of stewed rabbit."

It is exaggerated, perhaps, but failing stewed rabbit, one can always guess that there are hares hiding in Courbet's woods. Even when he takes us far from "gardens and woods," his landscapes are full of strong vegetable smells, and not conducive to peaceful dreams, and one fancies that at any moment the crack of a gun may ring out through his forests.



XXXII. CHASSEURS EN FORÊT. (Sportsmen in the Forest.)

PLATE XXXIII. LE COMBAT DE CERFS (THE STAG FIGHT)

COURBET had been an enthusiastic spectator of stag-fights in the parks at Hamburg and Wiesbaden. But it was at Frankfort, after his great shooting adventure, that he began his great picture. The artist had had the head of his victim stuffed and hung with a similar trophy in a studio in the Museum, which was placed at his disposal by the Director, Professor Jacob Becker. On the other side of the Maine, near an inn supplied with excellent ham and a very creditable white wine, was a little wood which gave him his background.

The picture was finished in less than a week. Courbet replied bluntly to Professor Becker, who timidly expressed his regret that the leaves were not drawn in sufficient detail: "Herr Becker, you are certainly a good professor of anatomy, but you will never be anything but a dunce in painting!" And as there were many capable interpreters in Frankfort, the remark cut short the relation of the two artists. Courbet returned to Ornans. There he altered his landscape, having found a more suitable scene in the Jura.

"Le Combat de Cerfs," also known as "Le Rut du Printemps," was shown in the Salon of 1861. It was another success, to which Olivier Merson has borne notable witness. "It is," he said, "the best picture yet exhibited by M. Courbet. Every detail is closely studied, and painted roundly and satisfyingly. The earth is solid; the leaves, the grass, the brambles, are perfectly painted; one can feel the leaves trembling and rustling. The tone of the leaves, the texture of the bark,

rough or smooth, the accentuation of the silhouettes are varied with consummate skill and knowledge. The background has an almost solemn depth; the foreground is virile and powerful; even in those parts of the picture which seem most impetuously done, there is revealed the calculation of an artist who is master of his brush and of his palette, and all these qualities are beautifully united in the vigour and harmony of the colour. . . .

M. Courbet has sounded an admirable note. Will he be able to keep it up? "

The State offered to buy "Le Combat de Cerfs," but the negotiations fell through. The picture was shown at the Antwerp Exhibition in 1861, at the private exhibition in 1867, and at the great sale of 1881 it was finally bought for 41,900 francs. It should be seen in the Louvre on a fine sunny morning. The light then gives life to the usually opaque background, and revives the former splendour of the underwoods.



1487 Musée de Louvre. — Combat de Cerfs, par Gourbet. X. Plon.

XXXIII. LE COMBAT DE CERFS. (The Stag Fight.)

PLATE XXXIV. LE CHASSEUR D'EAU (THE
WATER HUNTER)

THE Salons of 1857 and 1861 contained most of Courbet's output as a painter of hunting scenes. In the latter exhibition he had, besides "Le Combat de Cerf," "Un Cerf à l'Eau," "Un Renard dans la Neige," and "Un Piqueur et son Cheval." The last picture was thought absurd, and "worthy of the painter in his worst days." The artist tried to make it better subsequently, but under its new title, "Le Cheval Dérobé," it is still a very bad picture.

However, Courbet was soon to receive, for a new picture of the same series, the most unanimous chorus of praise that he ever provoked in the whole course of his long career. In the Salon of 1866, his famous "Remise des Chevreuils" met with nothing but praise. All those who had hitherto been shocked by the strong personality and the rather brutal talent of the painter, were loud in their admiration of this almost insignificantly charming picture. The numerous deer that Courbet painted from this model, "all as pleasing as those of the 'Remise,'" as he said in an unpublished letter in the Doucet library (February 13, 1870), always found a public. A "Cerf aux Ecoutes" of the same calibre, painted in 1859, was given to the Louvre. As for "Le Remise," it was sold by the artist for 15,000 francs, was in turn in the Lepel-Cointet, Laurent-Richard and Secrétan collections, and was finally bought for 76,000 francs by a society of amateurs, and given to the Louvre. It has become so hackneyed by reproductions of all kinds and sizes, that we may be excused from reproducing it here.

Mention must be made of the "Hallali du Cerf," now in the Besançon museum, which created a very different sort of sensation in the exhibition of 1867, and the Salon of 1869. The general opinion was that the execution is "chimerical," and far above the pretensions of the picture.

In the last years of his life, when his extreme corpulence and growing infirmities made walking and violent exercise extremely difficult for him, Courbet did not give up his favourite subjects. One of the last of his fine hunting pictures was painted in 1873, and shows us one of those landscapes under snow, of which he was so fond, a "Chasseur d'Eau," out after teal and wild duck. It is now in the Duret collection.



XXXIV. LE CHASSEUR D'EAU. (The Hunter by Water.)

PLATE XXXV. LE RETOUR DE LA CONFÉRENCE (THE RETURN FROM THE CONFERENCE)

IN 1863 at Saintes, with a great air of mystery, Courbet began a new picture as large as "L'Enterrement" and "L'Atelier." All that he would say about it was that it would be "highly critical and comic."

The picture was begun in an unfinished building next to the Imperial stud. But the Director had no sooner seen the first sketch than he begged Courbet to take it away and finish it in some less official place.

Old Faure, the ferryman of Berteau, gave him the hospitality of a first-floor room in his house. He even procured a curé's cassock and a nice little grey donkey which was with some difficulty hoisted up to the artist's room. Courbet finished his picture in comparative secrecy and sent it to the Salon chuckling over the "uproar" he thought it would create.

He had his desire. The famous "Retour de la Conférence" was returned incontinently "as an outrage on religion and morality" and he was forbidden to exhibit it even in the Salon of the Rejected. "Since they force me to it," cried Courbet, "I shall paint them 'Le Coucher de la Conférence.' "

Meanwhile he hung the picture in his studio in the Rue Hautefeuille, opened the doors wide, and for several days there was a constant flow of interested spectators passing in front of the excommunicated picture.

It can be very shortly explained. On the Ornans road the priests of the deanery are returning to their curés from the ecclesiastical Monday conference. But apparently they have lunched overwell. . . . That is the magnifi-

cent discovery which Courbet committed to a ten-foot canvas.

The indignation of the sober-minded over this enormous piece of facetiousness was responded to by the praises of the bolder spirits. Once more Proudhon scattered jewels of subtlety over his explanation of the scene: "An inevitable reaction of Nature against the ideal." Castagnary, after an elegant résumé of the painter's whole career, declared that Courbet had never in his life been so successful in composition.

Rubbing his hands with glee at the tumult, Courbet flung himself into the most seditious utterances. Champfleury said with some asperity, "You are talking too much and painting too little." "Here's another fellow sold himself to the government," said Courbet.

"Le Retour de la Conférence" was sent out on a tour of Europe. It was shown at Ghent in 1868; but it has since been burned. There is a small replica in the Saint collection.



XXXV. LE RETOUR DE LA CONFERENCE. (The Return from the Conference.)

PLATE XXXVI. VENUS ET PSYCHE (VENUS
AND PSYCHE)

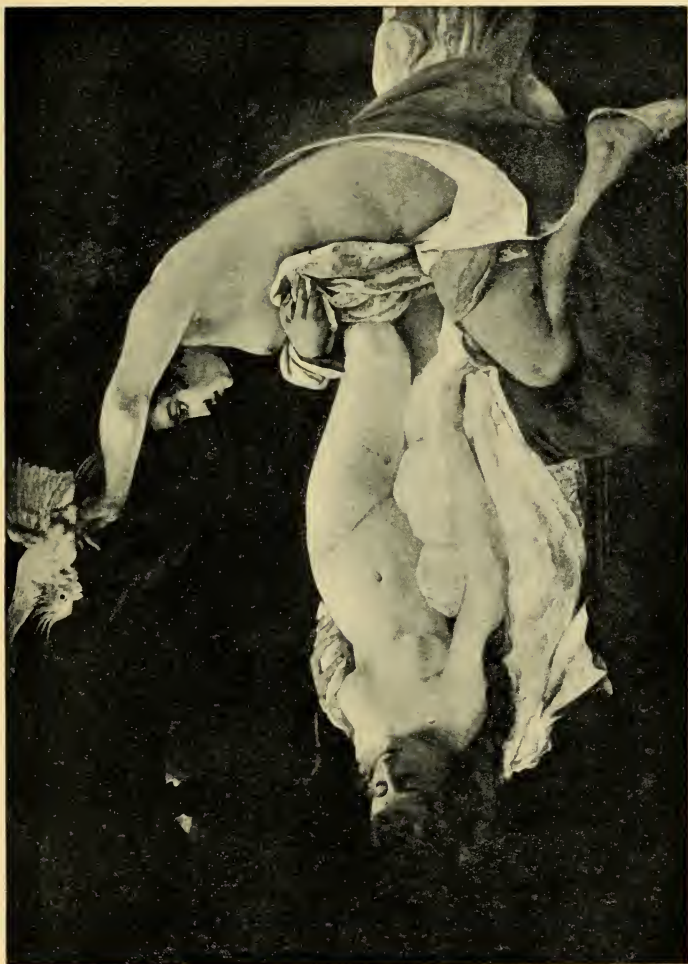
COURBET talked very seriously of painting a series of anti-clerical pictures. "If you see him," wrote Champfleury to Buchon in November, 1863, "try to keep him in the country as long as possible. He needs contact with Nature. He has been telling Sainte-Beuve that he is going to paint another picture of the priests. To my mind he is making a great mistake, and you know that I am no disciple of Saint Vincent-de-Paul. . . . Whatever he may say, 'Le Retour de la Conférence' was a setback. Courbet must paint landscapes, domestic subjects; that is what he can do; but, in Heaven's name, keep him from symbolism and satire for which he is not in the least fitted!"

The artist only partially renounced his project and his "Coucher de la Conférence" is to be found in a series of vignettes for the pamphlet "Les Curés en goguette," which was published in Brussels in 1868. It was much against his will that he refrained from symbolism and satire, as Champfleury had rightly warned him. In January, 1864, he began, so he says, a new "epic picture . . . a subject after my own heart!" This was the "Source d'Hippocrène," "an allusion to the condition of contemporary poetry, a serious, though avowedly humorous, piece of criticism." But the picture was destroyed by accident just as the artist had grown weary of his new joke and so it was that the poets escaped the fate which had already overtaken the priests.

By way of employing the short time he had left before the exhibition, the artist, no doubt with his mind full of the figure of the "Source," returned to one of his favourite

themes, the female nude. In a thoroughly literary frame of mind he christened his picture "Vénus poursuivant Psyché de sa Jalousie." But only the title is an abnegation of Courbet's hatred of fabulous subjects. His figures are represented in a purely Second Empire setting. "There are," he wrote, "two nude women painted life-size in an entirely new style—for me." And the picture does reveal a curious development of the artist's talent. He has changed his frank, rather coarse craftsmanship, rather unhappily, for smooth clear painting and a more cramped and circumscribed design.

The picture was not finished in time for the Salon but it was shown in the Brussels exhibition of 1864. It was bought for 18,000 francs by M. Lepel-Cointet. The parrot for which there is very little explanation, disappeared from the picture in the replica that was painted subsequently.



XXXVI. VENUS ET PSYCHE. (Venus and Psyche.)

PLATE XXXVII. LA FEMME AU PERROQUET
(THE WOMAN WITH THE PARROT)

THE parrot which was removed from the hand of Venus reappeared in another picture, even more celebrated, to which it gave its name. It was exhibited at the same time as the "Remise des Chevreuils" at the Salon of 1866. "If they are not satisfied this time," said Courbet, "they must be hard to please! They are going to have two proper pictures entirely after their own hearts."

"They" were quite satisfied. "They" were even "bowled over" if the artist is to be believed. At least if we are to take "they" to mean the public and ordinary people; among these we must include the government represented by M. de Nieuwerkerque, who expressed his approval in such terms that Courbet thought his picture must surely be bought by the State. But it was said that M. de Nieuwerkerque's good intentions only led to disaster. A few months later it was announced that the Director had bought "Le Ruisseau Couvert" (now in the Louvre with the title "Ruisseau du Puits-Noir") but gave up all idea of "La Femme au Perroquet." We must beg leave to doubt Courbet's boast that his protests forced the superintendent to resign. As it is not in the power of artists to determine the lives of superintendents, Courbet had to console himself with angry declarations that the government was on its last legs and "could not last more than two years!"

For the rest the concessions made in these two pictures did not deceive the critics. "So far from being a dull, cold generalization," said Charles Blanc of "La Femme au Perroquet" "she has a proper name, and is certainly

Pamela or Theresa. . . . However, except for the head in which there is some truth, though she has snakes for hair, like the Medusa of the Institutes, the woman's body rings hollow. It is drawn, put together, and posed without the slightest regard for the laws of anatomy. The right arm has no wrist; the right hip, under the officious piece of stuff which partly covers it, is not joined on to the body where it ought to be. . . . Does a man need to be, and to boast of being, a realist to paint swollen flesh and tricky effects when you are pretending to paint a compact, palpable and positive body? "

And honest Bonvin declared more briefly that Courbet had begun to play the game of bluff!

Castagnary protested that with only a little more time the artist would have painted a masterpiece. "Consider the magnificent quality of the technique and the painting! . . . The flesh, the arms, the torso, the belly! . . . What man has ever painted anything like it? "

"La Femme au Perroquet" was shown again at the private exhibition in 1867, and the Munich exhibition in 1869. It is now in the Bordet collection at Lyons.



XXXVII. LA FEMME AU PERROQUET. (The Woman with the Parrot.)

PLATE XXXVIII. JÔ, FEMME D'IRLANDE (JO,
AN IRISHWOMAN)

AFTER the episode of "La Femme au Perroquet" Courbet was on such bad terms with the Government that he could not but be out of humour with the official Salon. He did not altogether refrain from exhibiting but he decided to keep the best of his work for a private exhibition. This time he determined to do things on an even grander scale than in 1855.

For a moment the artist seems to have had a presentiment of the disillusion and misfortune that were to dog the end of his career. "I am growing old, very old," he wrote to Bruyas on April 27, 1867, "we are ageing in spite of our spiritual activity. I am going to court ruin once again. Failure will be no light thing to a man of my age." But his sturdy self-confidence soon returned to him. "I have spent 50,000 francs," he wrote on May 28. "My scheme is a triumph. I have built a cathedral on the finest site in Europe, by the Alma Bridge, just by the Seine, in the heart of Paris and the whole world is staggered. . . . I have triumphed over the moderns and over the ancients; the issue is still in the balance. . . . I have put to shame the whole art world! "

The catalogue included about one hundred and twenty pictures, among which, with five or six exceptions, were all his most important works. "Even so," he said in a note, "it is but a small portion of my whole work, which would comprise one thousand pictures."

Among the latest in point of date we may mention the beautiful portrait of a woman whose splendid red hair reminds us of the Woman with the Parrot; it was called,

"Jô, Femme d'Irlande" in 1867 and has since been known as "La Belle Irlandaise" or "La Belle Hollandaise." She was a friend of Whistler's, whom Courbet met in 1864 at Trouville. "I have been visited by more than two thousand ladies in my studio," wrote Courbet to his father. "They all want their portraits painted by me after seeing my pictures of Princess Karoly and Mlle Aubé. . . . Besides those two I have painted two portraits of men and some seascapes, altogether thirty-five canvases, to everybody's amazement. . . . I have bathed eighty times. For the last six days (this was in November) I have bathed with Whistler, the painter, who is here with me; he is an English pupil of mine."

"La Belle Irlandaise" is dated 1866. It was shown at the Besançon Exhibition of 1868, and was then sold to M. Emile Durier. Estignard mentions it in 1897 as being in Mlle Trouillebert's collection. A replica of the picture (here reproduced) is now in New York.



XXXVIII. JO, FEMME D'IRLANDE. (Jo, the Irishwoman.)

PLATE XXXIX. LA SIESTE (THE SIESTA)

THE exhibition of 1867 occasioned an important and interesting article on Courbet's career from the pen of Castagnary:

"By what strange fatality comes it that the art which has gone back to the traditions of our primitive school of painting and enriched them with the craftsmanship perfected by three centuries of artists . . . has during these last fifteen years incurred universal execration, while in the hands of a bold and adventurous young man, marvellously endowed with natural gifts, it has been expressed with such power, truth, and freshness? . . .

"The reason is this. . . . Courbet's painting has suffered from the reaction of 1850, it has succumbed to the same forces as the Republic of February. . . .

"What was the meaning of his audacity? Whence came these peasants, these stone-breakers, these hungry, ragged folk who for the first time were seen taking their places among the mythological divinities of the Academy and the swaggering noblemen of the romantics? Were they not the sinister advance guard of the hordes of Jacques Bonhommes whom public anxiety . . . saw . . . swelling to the assault of the elections of 1852. . . .

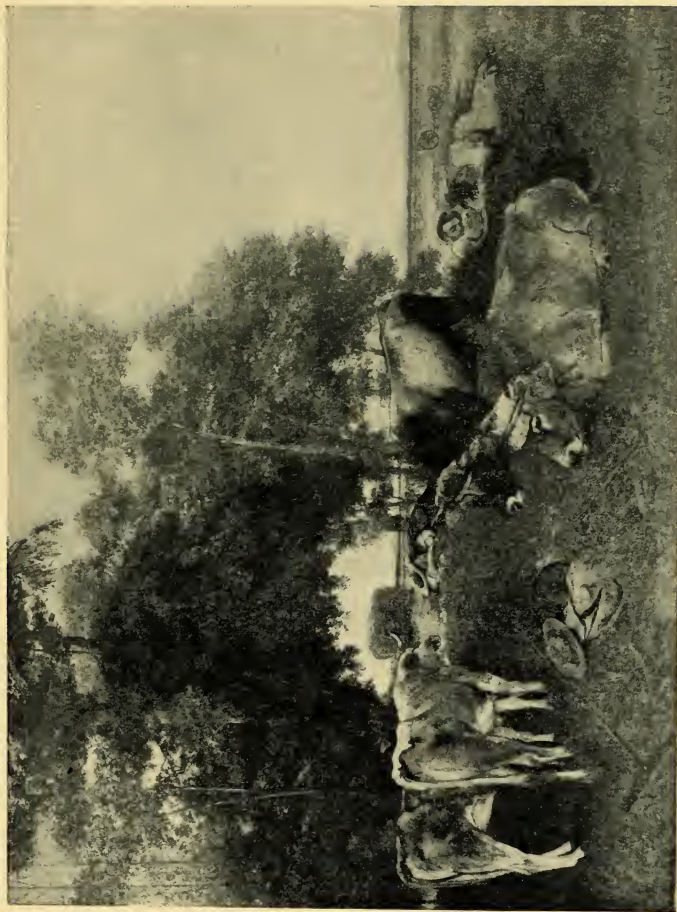
"Never has a painter had to submit to so much outrage and affront. I said just now that to show his entire output Courbet would have to take a room as long as the Luxembourg gallery; he could paper the whole of the Louvre with the insults drawn down upon him by his work. . . .

"But now, after ten years, the revolution is accomplished. False susceptibilities, false delicacy, false rancour are no more. . . . Every man who is for political liberty,

philosophical observation, and simplicity in literature is on Courbet's side in art."

His triumph, however, was not so complete as Castagnary made out. The sarcasm and indignation originally provoked by his work had disappeared but only to give way to indifference. Paul Mantz says that he was often quite alone in the cathedral by the Alma Bridge and that the treasurer had a melancholy look.

The more recent pictures created no sensation. We have already mentioned the indifferent reception accorded to "L'Hallali du Cerf," now in the Besançon museum. Another picture, never before shown, which appeared later on in the Salon of 1869 pleased nobody but Charles Blanc; this was "La Sieste pendant la Saison des Foins," an austere, grave piece of work, admirably conceived, but weak in execution, heavy in parts and inadequate in others. It is now in the Petit-Palais, in the gallery enriched by the gifts of Mlle Juliette Courbet.



XXXIX. LA SIESTE. (The Siesta.)

PLATE XL. LA VAGUE AUX TROIS BARQUES
(THE SEA WITH THREE BOATS)

JUST when the painter seemed to have made up his mind to conquer public opinion with striking subjects and technical concessions, his talent suddenly seemed to spring into active life again in the creation of a series of magnificently powerful, and sanely simple, seascapes.

The three examples here reproduced belong to this period and date from the artist's stay at Etretat in 1869, though we have to go farther back to find Courbet's first attempts at sea-painting.

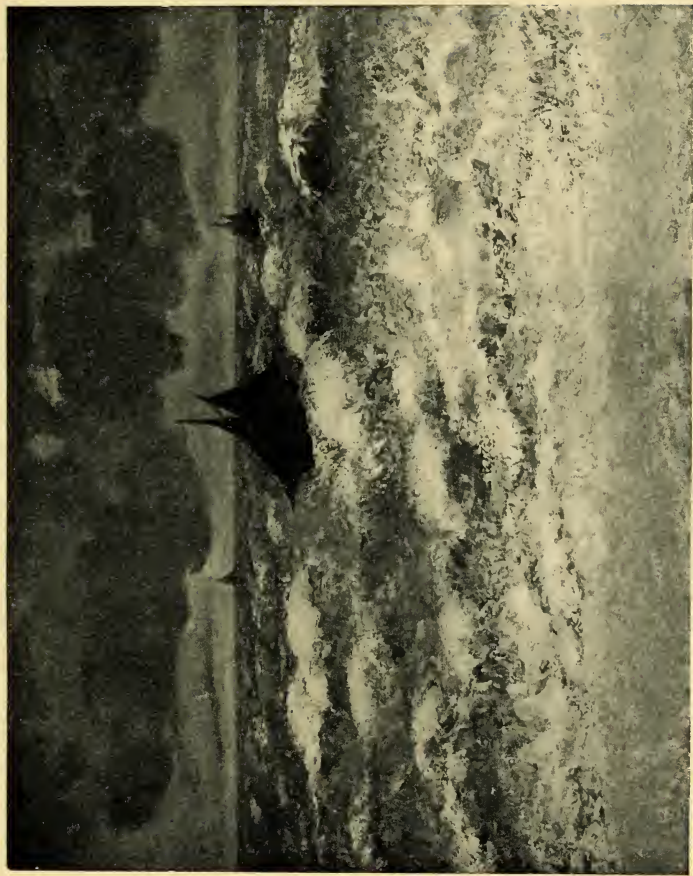
It was during his walks round Montpellier, in 1854, at Palavas, Maguelonne, Camargue, that he first revealed his passion for the sea. In 1859 Zacharie Astruc excitedly discovered in his studio the studies he had brought back with him from that journey: "they express every hour of the day, all the strange changes of the sea, the liquid, tempestuous, profound sky, infinite as the sea. Effects of sunlight, sea-fog, wind, grey morning twilight, the luminous serenity of midday, the veiled and tranquil mystery of the evening. Here a few ships skimming like birds across the clear face of the water; . . . again, the lighthouse battered by the waves, a boat tossing on the strand; . . . there a troop of wild white horses almost merged into the pale colour of the waves, while they listen to their dying plaint, waves tossing and scudding; and again the unbroken gloomy solitude stretching away and away, terrifying, menacing in its power and grandeur—the purple sea boldly marking the horizon against the blue sky. . . . Every poem of the sea combined and expressed in tones so simple, so delicate, so great, so bold and so true! "

A little later in 1859, accompanied by Schanne, Courbet went to Havre to discover the channel.

There he met Boudin, who took him to Honfleur and introduced him to Claude Monet. To this period belong "Les Falaises de Honfleur," "Le Coucher de Soleil sur la Manche," and "L'Embouchure de la Seine."

From that time on Courbet spent every possible summer with his friends on the Normandy coast. He was there in 1864, 1865 and 1866, at Trouville, whence he wrote to Bruyas: "I have just painted twenty-five seascapes in the same style as the one you have and those I painted at Cabanes; twenty-five autumn skies, each one more extraordinary and free than the last; it is very amusing."

Most of the seascapes in the 1867 exhibition date from this period.



XL. LA VAGUE AUX TROIS BARQUES. (Waves and Three Boats.)

PLATE XLI. FALAISE D'ETRETAT (CLIFF AT ETRETAT)

DURING the 1867 exhibition Courbet left Paris for a few days and went to Saint Aubin-sur-Mer, in Calvados, to bathe and to add a few studies to his Channel seascapes.

But the greatest pictures of the series date from the artist's stay at Etretat in 1869 with Diaz and his son. That resort made known by Isabey and Alphonse Karr, was not then over-crowded and the artist could indulge his nautical propensities as much as he liked. (The sailors called him the "seal.") Some of the rude health of his life is expressed in the numerous studies painted at that time.

Two of them are famous: "La Vague," in the Louvre, and the "Falaise d'Etretat," both exhibited in the 1870 Salon. "Though I cannot join the pæan of his enthusiastic admirers," wrote Paul de Saint-Victor, "I appreciate M. Courbet's two seascapes. There is a certain amount of exaggeration, even, one might say, of over-emphasis, in the mineralogical profusion with which he has endowed his rocks in the "Falaise d'Etretat." They are glittering with the whole category of precious stones, from diamonds to malachite. But there is grandeur in the view, and the execution is free and solid; the sky shines with that fresh brilliance that it always shows after a storm. The piece only fails in the matter of perspective both in drawing and in colour. . . ."

That defect has been laid at the door of every open-air painter by critics accustomed to the scientific and rather conventional perspective of studio landscape. Castagnary seems to us to have been better inspired in his unreserved

praise of this splendid picture: "These two seascapes by Gustave Courbet must be placed in the very first rank among our masterpieces, in the lofty region of great art, where idea and execution are in perfect accord. This year I fancy that even his most determined adversaries must be silenced and that there will be a unanimous verdict in favour of the great painter. 'Le Falaise d'Etretat' with its simplicity of composition, its powerful aspect of truth, its grey rocks topped with a velvety carpet of gramineous plants, its luminous fresh sky, just washed by a storm, its waves heaving to the farthest horizon, the cavities in which the water is coloured by the faint shadows, the free and joyous air that fills the picture and envelops every detail, and, above all, its truthful rendering which banishes art from the picture and leaves only Nature, is most striking, astonishing, moving, and must rouse admiration in every spectator in proportion with the degree of sensibility with which he has been endowed."

There are two slightly different copies of the "Falaise d'Etretat." One was bought by Brame in 1870 for 8,000 francs. The other was sold in 1872 for 13,000 francs.



XLI. LA FALAISE D'ETRETAT. (The Cliffs, Etretat.)

PLATE XLII. LA VAGUE (THE WAVES)

THE picture which has become so widely known under this name was called "La Mer Orageuse" in the Salon catalogue of 1870. Many people preferred it to the "Falaise d'Etretat" which was painted and exhibited at the same time.

"I was even more struck by 'La Mer Orageuse,'" wrote Castagnary. "It is not a partial and local description like the cliff just mentioned; it is the eternal drama which is being played in all countries, on all shores, when the tempest begins to roar, and the sky is heavy with clouds, and the waves heave and toss and are crowned with foam and ships going out to sea scud along like birds at the mercy of the winds. Courbet was fortunate enough last summer at Etretat to see all this from his window and to be able to set it down there and then, a rare concurrence of conditions. This it is that gives his picture its rightness, its precision and the sober truth with which it is characterized. . . . Sky and sea are both drawn with the same care and painted with that supple, elegant, harmonious quality of paint which makes Courbet at the same time a great and subtle colourist. As I write I am reminded of Eugène Delacroix's seascapes. I should like to place 'La Mer Orageuse' side by side with one of those beautiful pictures which I see in my imagination—'Le Naufrage de Don Juan' or 'Jésus dans la Tempête,' especially the latter. . . . Which would bear away the palm? I do not know; but so far as I can tell from what I remember it seems to me—and I beg pardon if I blaspheme the last of the romantics—that the Ormans master would not be worsted."

Less kindly was Paul de Saint-Victor, who saw neither

the grandiose arabesque, nor the powerful and harmonious colouring, nor the splendid sky and only made this perfectly justifiable objection: "I find 'La Mer Orageuse' much less to my taste. No doubt the artist has rendered the tremendous, sonorous, roaring of it all, but it seems instead of waves to be rolling rocks from the shore and shingle from the beach. You may look in vain for a drop of water in this petrified ocean. If you took any portion of this picture at random and showed it to anyone who had not seen the whole he would take it for a piece of a wall."

"La Vague" fetched 17,000 francs in 1872 at the Courbet sale and the State bought it from M. Haro in 1878 for 20,000 francs. There is a slightly different copy in which the boats in the foreground are replaced by a rock.



XLII. LA VAGUE. (The Waves.)



PLATE XLIII. JULES VALLES

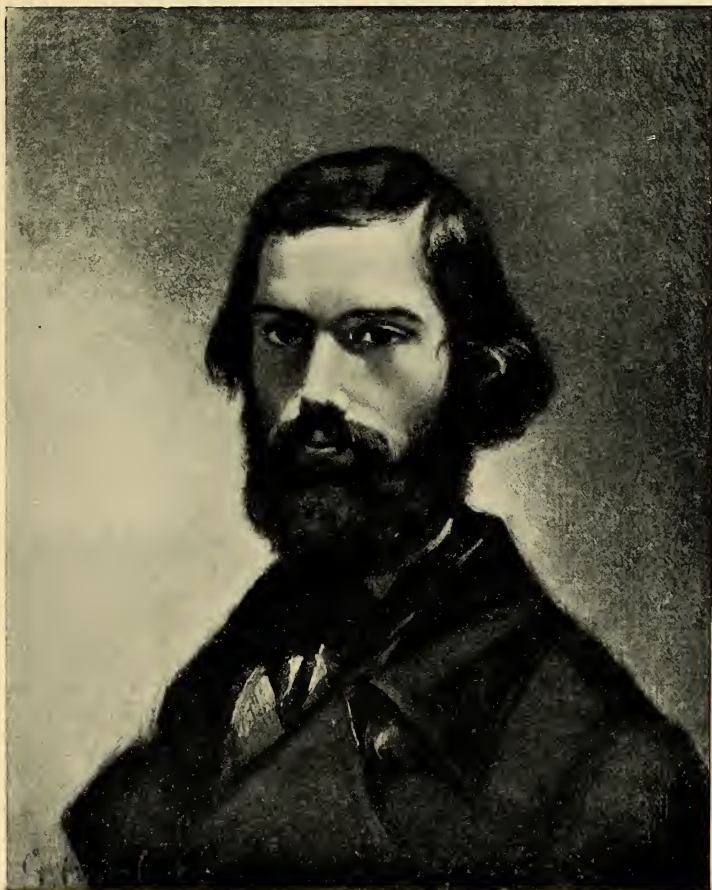
THE fine pictures just mentioned ought to have convinced Courbet once for all that there was no need for him to be everlastingly running after celebrity in order to achieve fame. Unfortunately circumstances provided him with more perilous opportunities than ever for standing in the limelight.

At that time he was living with his friends, Castagnary and Carjat in the overheated atmosphere of the Café de Madrid. With Gambetta, Floquet, Spuller, he hobnobbed with the future leaders of the Commune: Delescluze, Paschal Grousset, Raoul Rigault, and Jules Vallès, the warm-hearted man of letters, the future editor of the "Cri du Peuple," of whom he painted a fine portrait (now in the Peytel collection). Courbet had no difficulty in proving a match even for the most visionary and hot-headed. "Between one pipe and the next," said Hetzel to Mme Adam "in the café, one could lead him on to the greatest extravagance."

This was shown to be true when the Government was induced by the success of "La Vague" to realize one of Courbet's dearest desires by giving him the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Prompted by his comrades the painter suddenly perceived that it would mean dishonour for him to accept this distinction from the enemy and he replied with a vehement refusal. His action was immediately rewarded with a veritable triumph. "Never," he wrote, "never has there been such a success as that which I have enjoyed this year; with my seascapes the year has been in every way perfectly splendid for me."

It was, alas, Courbet's last splendid year. In opposition

his tactlessness made no great matter, but the fall of the Empire suddenly placed him in a position of apparent power. He was appointed President of the "Commission des Artistes" in September, 1870, and would have filled the office creditably enough if he had not come by the unfortunate idea of pandering to the republican hatred of the Vendôme Column, the detested symbol of War and Empire. "Knock down the Column" was at that time a commonplace threat. The idea seemed to him so magnificent that he drew up a petition recommending it to the Government of the National Defence. The project went so far that on April 12, 1871, the Commune ordered the monument to be removed. Courbet, who was elected a Commune deputy and a delegate of the Fine Arts a few days later, urged that the Commune should carry its decree into effect. On May 16, amid the plaudits of the mob, the Column was sawn through at the base and toppled down into a dung heap.



XLIII. JULES VALLES.

PLATE XLIV. FAISANS ET POMMES
(PHEASANTS AND APPLES)

WHETHER the part that Courbet played in the destruction of the Column be regarded as criminal or merely stupid, it must not be forgotten that he was the only sufferer by it. As he had been the most tactless and the noisiest of all those responsible the blame was thrown entirely on his shoulders. He was arrested on June 7, a few days after the fall of the Commune, and tried before a court-martial on August 14. His attitude was pitiful. The poor wretch had lost all heart and energy. Broken, pale, suffering from a disease which was soon to necessitate a serious operation, he listened without protest to all the witnesses for the defence, who agreed in maintaining that he was just a harmless irresponsible child. So far from disarming the public jury, his want of spirit provoked the most cowardly insults and sarcasms. The gendarmes were hard put to it to protect their prisoner against the mob, and a young woman spat on his grey beard. In spite of a courageous admission by Paschal Grousset, who took all the responsibility for the act with which Courbet was charged upon his own shoulders, in spite of the skilful defence of Lachaud, and a moderate indictment by the Government prosecutors, the painter was declared guilty and sentenced—with worse in store—to six months' imprisonment and a fine of five hundred francs.

"They have killed me," said Courbet to a friend. "These people have killed me, I feel it, and I shall never do anything good again!"

However he was soon to be back at work. In Sainte-

Pélagie, where he was imprisoned on September 22, 1871, his friends and relations showed him countless marks of sympathy to help him to forget the storm of hatred that was let loose upon him. One day when his sister Zoé brought him a bunch of holly covered with red berries he felt the desire to paint once more and persisted until he had been given permission to have his colours and brushes.

It was in these circumstances that he began an admirable series of still-life studies, apples, pears, oranges, grapes, pomegranates, dahlias, all of a masterly freedom and vigour.

Shortly afterwards he moved his easel to the house of Doctor Duval at Neuilly. After Nélaton had performed a successful operation, and after he received on March 2, 1872, formal notice of his liberation he remained at Neuilly seeking forgetfulness in unbroken work. To this period belong, among many other fine pictures, the "Pommes Rouges" of the Rouart collection, and the "Pommes et Faisans," here reproduced, which is in the possession of Mlle Juliette Courbet.



XLIV. FAISANS ET POMMES. (Pheasants and Apples.)

PLATE XLV. LA FEMME DE MUNICH (THE WOMAN OF MUNICH)

IN spite of the general hostility, which still made it impossible for him to appear in the streets of Paris, Courbet tried in the spring of 1872 to exhibit some of his pictures. He had to live and his position was very precarious. His studio at Ornans had been destroyed by the Prussians. His studio in the Rue Hautefeuille and the Rue du Vieux-Colombier had been stripped of all his pictures. At the same time advantage had been taken of his imprisonment to remove two boxes of pictures stored in a cellar in the Passage du Saumon: "a loss of 150,000 francs at least."

Courbet sent to the Salon of that year one of his recent still-life studies and also a study of the nude, known as "La Femme de Munich."

It was painted in that town in 1869 during one of Courbet's triumphal journeys through the Netherlands and Germany. The artists of Munich had seen him paint with his usual virtuosity copies of Franz Hals and Rembrandt, and a magnificent picture of a wood. "Give me a living model," said Courbet to Baron Remberg, who was discussing his painting with Kaulbach, Piloty and other artists, "and you shall see something else." Kaulbach there and then called his maid, who was used to such service, and the sittings began at once. The study was finished in a few hours.

When the jury of 1872 came to "La Femme de Munich," Meissonier said: "We need not look at it. It is not a question of art but of dignity; Courbet cannot appear in our exhibitions. He must be considered dead as far as we are concerned."

In spite of the protests of Fromentin, Robert Fleury, and Puvis de Chavannes (who, to his honour be it said, sent in his resignation and at once had one of his own pictures rejected by his colleagues) the jury adopted Meissonier's attitude amid the plaudits of the Press. Those artists who, like Daubigny, Corot, Daumier, Monet, Boudin, were on Courbet's side, could not make their voices heard in the chorus of vindictiveness.

Once more the painter had to resort to a private exhibition. His pictures of fruit were much admired in the Durand-Ruel gallery, and "La Femme de Munich" was exhibited in the Ottoz gallery, Rue Notre-Dame de Lorette, and was acclaimed by Castagnary in the following terms: "We pledge all lovers of good painting to go and see 'La Femme Couchée' in the shop where it has found a refuge from the susceptibilities of the painter of the Emperor's horse. It will give them infinite pleasure and they will be convinced once again that in the hands of true artists French art can still rise to the heights of the great art of all ages."

The picture was bought by Delacroix of Roubaix in 1870 and is now in the collection of the Prince de Wagram.



XLV. LA FEMME DE MUNICH. (The Woman of Munich.)

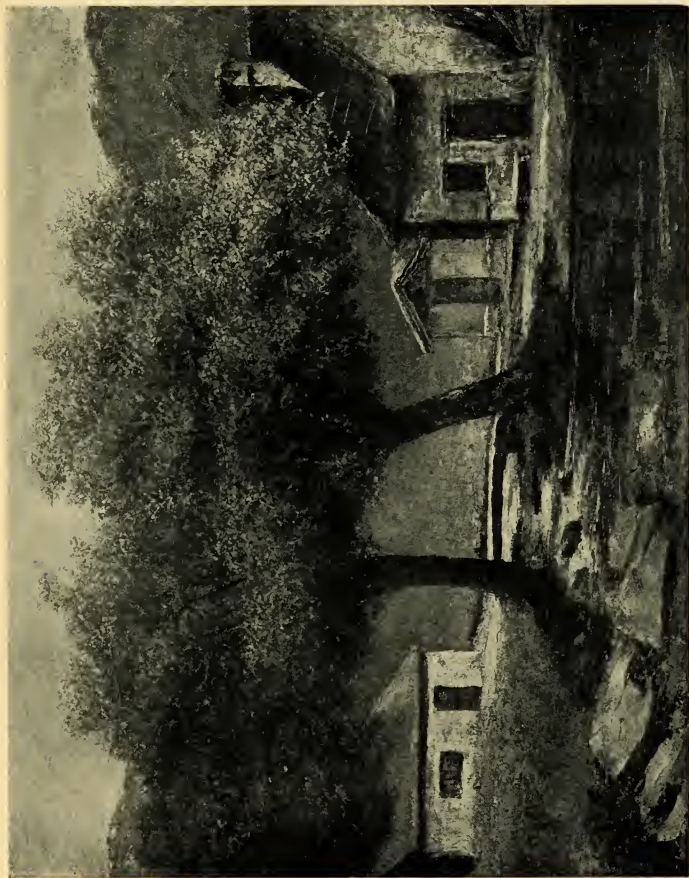
PLATE XLVI. MAISONS AU BORD DE L'EAU
(WATERSIDE HOUSES)

HAVING sold some pictures and ventured into the streets of Paris without misadventure Courbet took heart and left his refuge at Neuilly and went to his native country in search of the consolation that it had so often afforded him. But there, too, people were incensed against him. At Besançon, in the Boat Club, a grocer smashed his glass rather than dine with a Communard. At Ornans, which he reached on May 26, 1872, his friends' celebrations could not conceal the hostility of the Municipal Council which had removed from the Iles-Basses fountain the statue of the "Pêcheur de Chavots" which the artist had done in 1862 and given to his native town. His family was in mourning, for his mother had died of grief during her son's imprisonment. In spite of long walks amid the favourite haunts of his youth Courbet could not regain his physical and moral health. He wrote to his sister Zoé on January 16, 1873: "I have been ill more or less all winter with rheumatism and an enlarged liver. . . . I have many commissions that I cannot carry out: and I have been so depressed by everything that has happened to me that I stayed in bed until midday."

The Vienna exhibition then in preparation seemed to offer him an opportunity of resuming his old position among painters. On the advice of Castagnary, who spared no pains to help him, he informed the members of the jury of his intentions. But the vengeful Meissonier was still on the look out and Courbet was refused access to the exhibition.

However he began to work again with fresh courage.

His productive faculty was never more intense than during the spring of 1873. It is true that three of his pupils, Marcel Ordinaire, Cherubino Pata, and one, Cornu, were rather excessive in their zealous assistance. But the master's hand is revealed in a few fine pictures, such as the "Maisons au Bord de l'Eau," which must be attributed to this period. He was attempting to break new ground. In this picture his old, rather compact, manner is replaced by a rather dazzling technique which sends the air and the light rustling and quivering among the leaves and is a sort of forecast of the landscapes of the impressionist school.



XLVI. MAISONS AU BORD DE L'EAU. (Waterside Houses.)

PLATE XLVII. LES GRANDS CHATAIGNIERS
(CHESTNUT TREES)

IT seems incredible now that the unhappy Courbet's expiation should not have been thought complete by this time. However his enemies were preparing a new disaster for him.

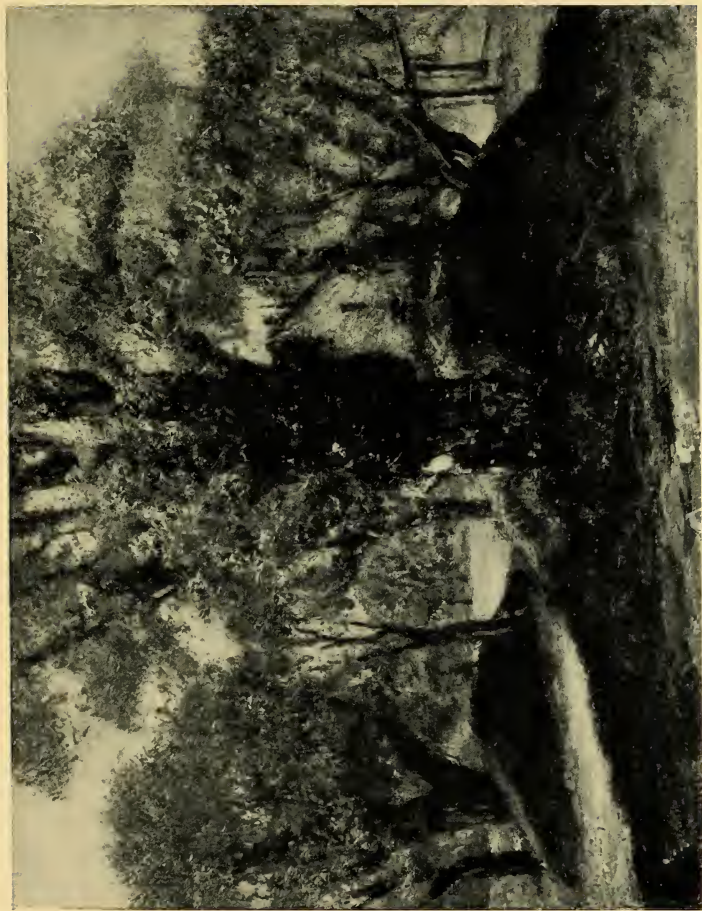
In May, 1873, under the Presidency of MacMahon and the Ministry of the Prince de Broglie, the Chamber voted in favour of the reconstruction of the Vendôme Column, and accepted an amendment introduced by the Bonapartists to do the work at Courbet's expense. The painter's property at Ornans and in Paris, his valuables deposited in various banks, his pictures entrusted to M. Durand-Ruel and other friends were impounded by the State. The railway companies were ordered to carry nothing in Courbet's name. The sum that he was called on to pay was so enormous that the artist had no alternative before him save imprisonment for debt. There was no other course open to him save flight to some more hospitable country.

On July 23 he reached Neuchâtel. After having wandered aimlessly for some days he found a final retreat just outside Vevey in the town of La Tour du Peilz.

His cordiality quickly overcame the mistrust of the inhabitants and they soon treated him with the most sympathetic hospitality. He lodged first with the minister, then at the Café du Centre and finally took a little house, an old fishermen's inn, which still bore its symbolic sign: "Bon Port," by the shores of the lake of Geneva.

There he followed the painful law-suits which involved his ruin. It was in vain that evidence was called to show that, as he had been only an accessory to the destruction

of the Column, it was monstrous to visit the whole vengeful consequences on him, the Civil Court of the Seine declared him civilly responsible, on June 26, 1874, and confirmed the distress upon his goods that had already been carried out. After interminable investigations by the Minister of Public Works, the First Chamber of the Civil Tribunal on May 24, 1877, fixed the State's claim at the fabulous sum of 323,091 francs, 68 centimes, payable in yearly sums of 10,000 francs. In spite of his agony of mind and indignation Courbet had gone on painting. He flung all his remaining energy and love for his craft into a last series of landscapes. His experiments with light and atmosphere begun during his last stay at Ornans are continued in these pictures of which "Les Grands Châtaigniers du Parc des Crêtes" is one of the most luminous and beautiful. It is in Mlle Juliette Courbet's collection.



XLVII. LES GRAND CHÂTAIGNIERS. (Big Chestnut Trees.)

PLATE XLVIII. LE CHATEAU DE CHILLON
(THE CASTLE OF CHILLON)

THERE are numerous landscapes dating from this period, studies of trees, views of the "Cascade d'Hauteville," "Lac Léman," "La Dent de Jaman" and "La Dent du Midi." The artist became particularly fond of the "Château de Chillon," and loved to paint its bold towers rising above the transparent water. The example here reproduced was formerly in the Gérard collection, but there are variations of it in the possession of Mme Castagnary, Mme Descombat, M. Cusenier, and in the Hôtel de Ville at Ornans.

He also took up the chisel, which he had sometimes handled and modelled a bust of the Helvetian Republic, which is of disputable form, though full of movement. On the pedestal is written this inscription: "Helvetia. Homage for Hospitality. Tour de Peilz, May, 1875." In accepting the bust in the name of his fellow-countrymen, the syndic expressed his gratitude with touching dignity: "We appreciate," he said, "the sentiment, very sweet and very delightful to us, which dictated your gift to us, and we are glad to know that your sojourn by the banks of our lake has brought you peace. . . . You have lived tranquilly beneath the flag of the liberty which has been your inspiration. We thank you for this testimony of your affection for us. . . . We shall carefully preserve this monument which will tell posterity 'An illustrious exile here found rest.' "

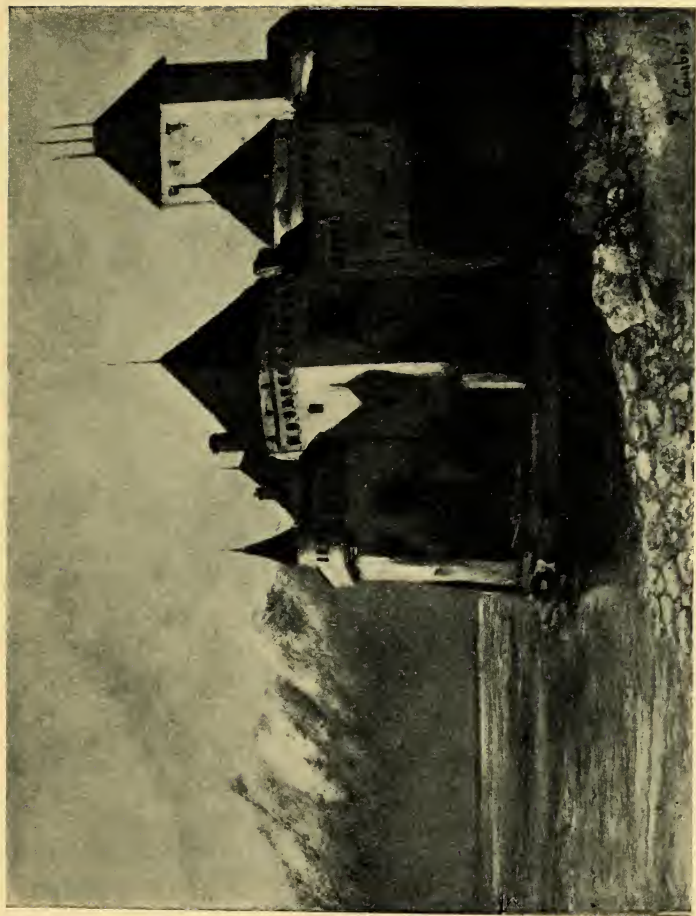
There are several replicas of the "Helvetia," one of which is at the entrance to the terrace at Meudon.

In June, 1877, the artist had a momentary hope that he might soon be restored to his position among French

painters. He sent to Paris a list of the pictures which he wished to show in the Universal Exhibition of the following year and this time he had the better of his adversaries. "Sir," said Henner to one of them, "among painters there is and can be only one opinion. If there were room for only ten of us in the Exhibition, M. Courbet would be one of those ten!"

But the reparation came too late. The artist's health had been gradually undermined by these years of tribulation. "My brain is so tired," he wrote at this time, "that it is a tremendous effort for me even to answer a letter." Dropsy, from which he had suffered for some time, suddenly made rapid progress. When he was in terrible physical agony he heard that a judicial sale of his pictures, conducted under the most deplorable conditions at the end of November, 1877, had had only the most insignificant results. That was the last piece of news that reached Courbet from France.

Letchworth: At the Arden Press



XLVIII. LE CHATEAU DE CHILLON. (Chillon Castle.)

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